University of Alberta

HOSPITALITY, THE STRANGER, AND PEDAGOGY

by

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Abstract

For the last decade hospitality has become a hopeful site for dealing with one of the enduring questions of human existence: *Who is my neighbor?* Particularly in Western European culture, the Stranger, the one who is Other to me, has been subsumed by the Enlightenment pursuit of the autonomous subject. By means of the cultivation of an exclusionary epistemology (Willinsky, Dussel, et al.), the West has largely forgotten possible origins of relationality outside of modernity. This seems quite evident even in modernist notions and practices of ethical virtue, with deep roots in our own history, which have eclipsed the face of Other. Current approaches to difference, by simply identifying the difference, produce indifference and other violence. Reducing *knowing Other* to *knowing about Other* has similar distancing effects, particularly in theological study, with profound effects on living in the presence of Other who shows up.

How did this come about? I am particularly interested in how corruptions of Christian faith and practice, particularly surrounding notions of truth, identity, freedom, and faith, reduces Life to a means to be used rather than an end that is evocative of mystery, awe, and love. Through theological and cultural reflection and hermeneutics, not searching for a universally valid foundation of human action and knowledge, but trying to avoid the dangers of radical relativism, the experience of estrangement and hospitality is probed, particularly as this unfolds in European culture, as a basis for contributing to the question, *How might hospitality, conceived as openness to the Stranger, inscribe our pedagogy?* Of particular interest is the work of Emmanuel Levinas, as he brings focus to a primordial notion of relationship with Other, and Hans-Georg Gadamer, as he unfolds hospitality in the unpredictable fusion of horizons, in such a way that character (*Bildung)* enters pedagogy, exposing distorting prejudices through an interpretive dance of what is already at play in learners.

Acknowledgements

Hermeneutics is always taken up in the midst of life where everyday questions are found. The hermeneutical quest is to understand life as it is and to interpret it in ways suggestive of the generative possibilities that it already holds. To recognize this places hermeneutical investigation in the middle of relationships, those with what I am investigating, as well as those already present within me prior to investigation. Obviously an inquiry into relationality involves many people who grace my life and make such an inquiry possible.

The Board of Alberta Bible College provided a twelve month sabbatical in 2001-2002, along with generous funding, that made this project feasible. Students and colleagues at ABC have shared the ensuing journey, providing a gentle and at moments spicy marinade that continues to season the possibilities of hospitality within theological education. The epitome of this is in my teacher and friend Boyd Lammiman who had a strange practice of pedagogy as presence, not merely presentation.

Educational theorists have helped immeasurably in clarifying and bringing discipline to the interpretation of key sources. Special thanks to Dr. Claudia Eppert and Dr. David Jardine who contributed much in the conversations around Immanuel Levinas and Hans-Georg Gadamer, respectively.

More than anyone Dr. David Geoffrey Smith encouraged my questions. I am deeply grateful for friendship, encouragement, and always the good question, so nourishing to life and learning. His desire to take stories seriously, including the true address of faith stories, continues to transform life and to mark making room.

I am grateful to Linda Passmore whose edits made the final product shine. All errors and misinterpretations are my responsibility.

My wife Monelle has been a genuine partner in life and in this project. Her own deep desire for hospitable living in relationship to others as well as to the earth, have kept this inquiry both grounded and expansive. Her personal support has kept me alive.

Ronald A. Fraser

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

For you have but mistook me all this while:
I live with bread like you, feel want,
Taste grief, need friends: subjected thus,
How can you say to me I am a king?[1]

"Why do I feel so far from God? I'm getting straight A's in all my classes, yet never have I felt so far from God. I just want to know Him! But I think so much about Him, sometimes I just want to scream!" This report of Shannon,[2] a first-year student, is for me a lingering metaphor into the alienations of contemporary culture, and insofar as that culture draws on Western theological roots, the alienations within contemporary Christian understandings of life as well. Shannon's experience of estrangement is all the more pronounced because she is a theological student. One would expect that theological reflection would draw one closer to Other, but this is not the case. What follows are theological and cultural interpretations, including the interface between the two, probing why someone seeking to know Other gets distanced from Other instead.

I must confess that I've wanted to scream sometimes myself. Her estrangement is very much mine too. I too am living out of a cultural logic of disintegration and estrangement that mocks talk of virtually anything that doesn't lead to personal autonomy, especially as the latter colludes with profit and global competitiveness. How do we live and learn in such a setting, where thinking the world apart is celebrated with Nobel prizes?

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[1] William Shakespeare, "The Life and Death of Richard the Second," Act 3 Scene 2. Posted November 13, 2000; retrieved April 27, 2008, from http://shakespeare.mit.edu/

[2] A pseudonym.

The exploration of hospitality, the stranger, and pedagogy unfolds as something of a quest[3] for me. After situating this quest in an introduction that includes genealogies of the problem, why I'm interested in it, why I'm approaching it this way, in my literature review I sought understanding of Western relationality in theological and philosophical ethics texts, as well as a number of sources that have sought to interface these with pedagogy. Chapter 3 includes a brief history of Western hospitality, tracing it to its Graeco-Roman and Judeo-Christian roots, as well as a discussion of the corruption of Western hospitality. Chapter 4 probes the question of methodology, of how Other has come to be studied, in an attempt to link ways of knowing and seeing (epistemology) and the lens through which we know and see (methodology) with the experience of estrangement. I am particularly interested here in how the Western "knowing self" positions itself in relationships. Chapter 5 examines the complicity of a particular theory of truth, found in particular expressions of Western theological understanding, in the estrangements of our world. It also probes options within both theological and postmodern sources to understand truth relationally and hospitably. Chapter 6 looks at theological pedagogies to understand how "openness to Other" might inscribe our life and work as educators.

Who Is the One Researching?

I come at this exploration having spent most of my life as a theological educator. The questions that I am looking into arise directly from personal struggles in studying historical and contemporary theology, and at times deep personal agony that, given that there is no such thing as a neutral educational process, I might be contributing to the estrangement of others, thus perpetuating the dividedness of life in my experience. The struggles that I am exploring here are within my own Christian tradition and have much to do with the alienation of word from being. Throughout this work I have had an

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[3] One of Nel Noddings' emphases on work on "care" in education is that moral education can be carried on within abstractions about which we claim to know, whereas the person for whom we are seeking to care, we actually don't know much about at all. Moral education needs to become more of a quest. O'Toole, K. 'Noddings: To know what matters to you, observe your actions,' *fx Stanford Online Report,* February 4, 1998. Retrieved April 24, 2008, from http://news-service.stanford.edu/news/1998/february4/noddings.html

emerging sense that these struggles are deeply commingled with the broader cultural and epistemological issues that pertain to fundamental alienations within the Western tradition more generally. Further, I have come to understand that contemporary theological alienations have considerable complicity in contemporary secular alienations, principally in the sense that conditions of inhospitality and alienation have been institutionalized in Western theological thought and relational praxis. I think then that this kind of reflection at the nexus of history, theology, and culture has the possibility of contributing to an understanding of Western relational logic, even if one has no particular personal religious sensibilities.

My inquiry then explores the relational logic in Western people that is found in contemporary pedagogy particularly, though I think not exclusively as this is practiced in theological education in the West. I'm not particularly interested in more things for instructors *to do* or more discoveries or information *about* the world that will save it. For one thing, hospitality itself suggests a certain embrace of Other,[4] at the door, this moment, without consideration of the baggage with which they may arrive. *Other is here,*

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[4] Where *Other* is capitalized, the presence of the Divine in persons is intended. This understanding is derived from the notion the *imago Dei* (lit., "image of God") primarily in Judeo Christian tradition. I understand it here not as a meme for the dominance that has surfaced regularly in the history of hermeneutics (the dominance of autonomous human reason, for instance, in the Enlightenment or for the sack of creation in the Industrial Revolution or for the domination of women by men in patriarchal cultures). Rather, I understand it here as a meme, a symbol for how much becoming persons proceeds from relationships with Other and the world. In this sense, Other is each person with whom I come into contact, and by virtue of such contact, I am simultaneously irreducibly different and interdependent within our irreducible difference. Victor Westhelle, a Brazilian theologian, interprets the *imago Dei* from the social context of the poor in Latin America. He suggests that to be created in the image of God is to participate, for instance, in affirming the dignity of those who harvest food from refuse because they do not have a vital space in which to live. The Other is used in this interdependent, interrelational sense. See Victor Westhelle, "Creation Motifs in Search of Vital Space." *Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside.* Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel, eds. (San Francisco: Harper, 1990), pp. 128-140. This definition presumes a certain ontological given; that is, that persons are becoming, reflected in philosophical theorizing around Otherness. At the same time it embraces the usage of social justice education in which Other is seen as an undesirable problem, as the consequence of social, economic, or political oppression; that is, as a construction of time and place. Sharon Todd nicely differentiates these meanings. See Sharon Todd, *Learning from the Other* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), p. 2ff. The notions of interdependent and interrelational helps to nest the radical alterity of theological concern and the social concerns around violent forces that deny food, shelter, and water, for instance, to embodied persons with knowable faces. If Other at points tends to be indeterminate, on the other hand, this is intentional. Hospitable relations arrive in the "insurmountability of the duality of beings," prior to my theology and my ethics. Immanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity,* Richard A. Cohen, Trans. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), p. 67.

now. For another, attempting to solve a problem in which one is inscribed is difficult at best and, at worst, results in inflicting more violence on persons. Living hospitably in the world has surprisingly little to do with saving the world; rather, living hospitably has much more to do with the *way one is* and the *way one knows* and how one seeks to travel light in the interests of sharing space with others. It is about living in the Presence of life that shows up, whenever, wherever, and however it does. It's about *being* in such a way that the rupture between academic study and hospitality will heal itself *in oneself.* As Wendel Berry has observed:

> One thing we dare not forget is that better solutions than ours have at times been made by people with much less information than we have. We know, too, from the study of agriculture, that the same information, tools and techniques that in one farmer's hands will ruin land, in another's will save and improve it. This is not a recommendation of ignorance. To know nothing, after all, is no more possible than to know enough. I am only proposing that knowledge, like everything else, has its place, and that we need urgently now to *put* it in its place.[5]

Berry is suggesting that this place into which knowledge must find its way has to do with virtues of hospitality and a host of words such as *care*, *love*, *self-discipline*, and *character*, *courage*, and *sacrifice*, which are surprisingly antiquated in contemporary academic life.

The contemporary estrangements and disintegrations of inner life are not just about the vanishing wholeness that I long to be mine, as though I could possess it and watch while my neighbor goes without. Rather, they are a microcosm of estrangements happening everywhere at this moment. Elie Wiesel writes, "Our century is marked by displacements on the scale of continents. Never before have so many human beings fled from so many homes."[6] Saskia Sassen documents the flows of immigrants and refugees from the east and south as they follow the flows of global capital to the north and west in the last four centuries of European history.[7] Fifty million refugees in the present world

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5 Wendell Berry, *Standing by Words* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1983), pp. 65-66.

6 Elie Wiesel, "Longing for Home," in *The Longing for Home*. Leroy S. Rouner, Ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), p. 19.

7 Saskia Sassen, *Guests and Aliens* (New York: The New Press, 1999). Sassen's work is a narrative of eviction, in contrast to the historical record of mainstream culture, which portrays Europe as a continent of mass emigration to the new continent. Europe has a long history of anti-immigrant feelings and racialization that continues today.

and an unrelenting slave trade in which profitability trumps legislation and consumption trumps caring[8] move both the site and time of inhospitality from an abstract concept to particular faces, tear-stained and desperate. As Johannes Witteveen puts it, "The financial markets have become the judges and juries of all economic policies." In the process, both the volatility and virtuality of global capital flows, operating exclusively out of the profit principle, increasingly induce national governments to alter their tax structures to favor *hospitality to capital,* superseding all other relationships, including fair labor practices and the protection of the environment.[9]

Globalization's objective is the pursuit of an unfettered, market-driven expansion of one's own material prosperity. In that the project compels us to embrace this pursuit—"There is no other way," as Margaret Thatcher announced—then the new common-sense and perhaps deepest expression of modernity is the pursuit of my own financial freedom. Competition is modernity's divine imperative, and the quantitative and measurable wins out over the qualitative and unmeasurable. Within these frameworks of economic practice, as popular television shows such as *The Dragon's Den* and *The Apprentice* celebrate, eviction is portrayed as a noble virtue. Life is reduced to counting the money, no matter the cost to relationships, be they of the social or the environmental kind. Relationships and ecosystems are objects for use, empty spaces to be possessed for personal profit, rather than already possessing intrinsic value of their own, into which all are already invited. If economic globalization is incapable of making space for a

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[8] According to a National Geographic Magazine (September, 2003), "There are more slaves today than were seized from Africa in four centuries of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The modern commerce in humans rivals illegal drug trafficking in global reach—and in the destruction of lives." See also Carol Off, *Bitter Chocolate: Investigating the Dark Side of the World's Most seductive Sweet* (New York: Random House, 2006). Off provides a social history of chocolate use in the developed world, tracing out the early Spanish introduction of cocoa from Central and South America to Europe to the current institutionalization of misery among small land owners and "bonded workers" (child slaves) in the service of consumption of "the food of the gods" (chocolate). This arises in the mix of immense profitability for "Big Chocolate" (Hershey, Roundtrée, Mars, Cargill, et al.), the complicity of governments in producing states (principally Cote d'Ivore and Bali) and "seduced ignorance" on the part of chocolate consumers.

[9] Johannes Witteveen, "Economic Globalization in a Broader, Long-Term Perspective: Some Serious Concerns." In Jan Joost Teunissen, Ed., *The Policy Challenges of Global Financial Integration* (The Hague: Fondad, 1998), p. 21. Witteveen comments that the volatility of private global flows, with virtually no social good accounted for, "creates a serious risk of cyclical disturbances to the development process" (ibid.).

hospitable world because of its tendency to commodify and instrumentalize everything, space and time included, what is to become of us?

There are ongoing attempts to make room with compassionate responses to the destructive effects of globalization, especially the growing gap between rich and poor nations in our world. Although their impact at structural levels may not contribute much, the work of NGOs at least draws attention to a host of particular issues. In 2000, government leaders from all parts of the world met and officially endorsed the so-called *Millennium Goals*, including cutting world poverty in half by 2015, creating universal access to clean water and primary education, and reducing infant mortality by two-thirds. Since then, even the United Nations Development Program reports publically express the concern that the endorsing nations will not meet these targets. How can that be? Some people attribute it to political will, including the international community, individual nations, and communities, and including the ongoing role of NGOs who seek to provide a place. At the same time there seems a deep-seated indifference, even abandonment, in the West, sometimes referred to as political will, or its absence, in dealing with issues of global poverty. This indifference is perhaps best illustrated in the fact that, despite wealthy nations' massive debt forgiveness of developing countries and despite lofty intentions, the gap between rich and poor continues to widen. One of the more significant factors in this is that wealthy nations refuse to problematize the most fundamental issue of economic sharing: the sharing of the means of exchange.[10] Compounding the issues are a relativization of the virtues of cultures under globalization, particularly views about what human beings can and ought to do, seemingly sacrificed on the altar of self-interest underwriting flows of capital. The defining tropes of Western relational culture, autonomy and tolerance, turns poor people into different people whose choices have made them poor.[11] Do the current models of dealing with difference, by simply

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[10] ibid.

[11] Oprah Winfrey has developed a self-improvement industry worth $10B, based on the premise that all dissatisfaction, poverty, and unhappiness is based on choice. Similarly, the lost treasure of happiness, the fountain of youth, or "The Secret" (to a Porsche, a bigger house, or a nicer boss), is a creation of our own circumstances through choice. See David Waters, "Under God." *Newsweek*, March, 2008. Retrieved May 14, 2008, from http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/undergod/2008/03/oprah_and_her_hunt_for_spiritu.html

identifying the difference, produce indifference and apathy or other kinds of violence? Where do we begin *to be* a neighbor? How do we begin to see their face, to embrace presence? Perhaps by taking into account the conditions of life that created refugees, homelessness, slavery, and estrangement in the first place. Without problematizing the logics and language of categorization behind them, the flow of those estranged, as the disconnections in our own lives, will continue unabated and unchallenged. Are technological and institutional forms of hospitality, preoccupied as they are with efficiency, actually counterproductive here? What might a *re*constructed hospitality that begins in who we are as relational beings look like?

Providing basic needs can be quite perfunctory and heartless. Some hospitality is provided as little more than a monetary exchange. In that, it can diminish a needy person as a *have-not.* Providing hospitality to others without m/patronizing them appears to be a considerable challenge. Christine Pohl observes that people recognize "welcome when hosts share their lives, and not just their skills, time or space."[12] So how is welcome to be extended in a welcoming way? In being present to whoever shows up, do I regard myself as a host or as a guest, or as both? Hospitality is more than sharing things; it is about the immediacy of sharing life with Other before me. Sharing lives involves a willingness to be with others in ways that reveal multiple dimensions of our humanity. Pohl says, "The dignity and equal worth of every person and valuing their contributions, or at least their potential contributions to the larger community" is central to the task of hospitality.[13] Peter Gathje adds that this sharing is difficult and creates great risk and vulnerability, but without it, the potential healing of presence, of facing my neighbor, is precluded because "we are not fully encountering others as persons."[14]

How has Western relational consciousness been shaped? What has happened to hospitality as a practical virtue of facing the stranger in the freedom of compassion and responsibility? How might this hospitality be embedded in pedagogy to nourish and challenge, sustain and transform life, beginning with my own?

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[12] Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room* (Grande Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), p. 180.
[13] Pohl, p. 61.
[14] Peter R. Gathje, "Hospitality in the Context of Academic Life," *Analytic Teaching,* Vol. 23, No. 1, p. 26. Gathje's article provides a valuable summary of Pohl's work.

Cultural Hermeneutics: "Hospitable Prospects for Pedagogy"

Who is my neighbor? How do I make time and space for them? In many ways this inquiry emerged from the conversation around these questions that have traversed millennia, but which seem to be increasingly subsumed in the Western world by the heady rush to autonomy. On the other hand, my neighbor as Other is so near, so visible, and so daily. My neighbor is the One who refuses abstraction. They are as present as the last visit with a person I have never met before—together with the hopes and fears of such an encounter: "How will they respond to me?" "What will they make of me?" "Will we connect?" "How will we connect?" "What will happen to us if we don't connect?" "Will we become enemies?" "What will we do with silence?" "How will I come across?" The latter is a particularly critical question when the sale depends on first impressions. "What will I learn about the Other, about myself?" "What will be my gift to them, theirs to me?" "Will my gifts, my presence, be appreciated?" "Will we be drawn together—or further estranged?" These questions, and more like them, come from a sense of who we are in the world, which is shaped largely by who we are in relation. I'm deeply interested in the question of hospitality, not as a soliloquy, but as a conversation in which, in Gadamer's words, I am "challenged" as I come to see "other's point," and a "fusion of horizons" arises[15] that is more in keeping with open doors and open hearts of hospitality.

In keeping with cultural hermeneutics, there is no view from nowhere.[16] Whereas traditional cultural studies found in anthropology or history often understood themselves as objective, disinterested, and even scientific, in recent years this is the site of ongoing problematization. In the interpretation of texts and cultures, pure objectivity is an illusion. This interpretation, like others, frame questions, perceptions, and reflections, from some place. They are situated. Although this may be regarded as a problem, making explicit the location of the interpreter within hermeneutics itself serves the hermeneutical task, as it can bear the gift of focus on ways in which access to power to interpret texts and

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[15] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 329, 331.

[16] This point is in the nature of hermeneutical in education. See, for example, David Jardine (2000) in his work with pedagogy and ecology and David Smith (2000, 2002, 2006) with globalization and education.

construct meanings serves to empower those who have traditionally been marginalized. This is apposite to the very hope of a pedagogy of hospitality, which is all about making space and time for Other in their arrival (Gadamer), or primordial presence (Levinas).[17] In this way a cultural hermeneutic, in the same way as a pedagogy of hospitality, without 'the face of Other' present, would be a contradiction in terms.

In the Christian tradition of the West, cultural hermeneutics is particularly useful. This is because of the tendency to privilege certain ways of reading and using theological texts, which, far from transforming readers, serves effectively to reaffirm preexisting prejudices, traditions, attitudes, and relationships, human and divine. Cultural hermeneutics can become a tool of emancipation for both persons and texts.[18] The hope of emancipation, however, begins in holding together the life-worlds of what I want to make sense of—in this case Other—and my own life-world. It is not found in distancing them. As Gadamer has reminded us, *"A person who reflects himself out of a living relationship to tradition destroys the true meaning of this tradition* [emphasis his]."[19] The location of this inquiry, what gives it a voice, is found therefore in several autobiographical and ethical reflections, the latter drawn out by the Other who *is* Present (Levinas) but whose Presence is threatened by practices that make a virtue out of distance.

Why Hospitality, the Stranger, and Pedagogy?

Autobiographical Reflections

My earliest awareness of hospitality still echoes as my parents, and my Grandmother who lived across the yard, opened their doors to neighbors and those just passing through: "Why don't you come over for tea?" "Why don't you come on in for a bite to eat? I'm sure we can find another cup of water for the soup." "Let's visit!"

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[17] The earliest and most methodologically self-conscious of these approaches is that of Latin American liberation theology, which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. This approach did not begin in academe, but rather in the concrete experience of poor people and their pastors who "hoed potatoes beside them." They insisted that the starting point for reading and interpreting Christian texts be the experience of the crushing poverty to empower resistance and emancipation.

[18] See particularly Christopher Rowland and Mark Corner, *Liberating Exegesis: The Challenge of Liberation Theology to Biblical Studies* (London: S. P. C. K., 1990).

[19] Gadamer, p. 354.

My father's ancestors went to Nova Scotia in the early 1800s amidst the treachery, greed, and estrangements of the "Improvements," or, as its victims called it, "the Highland Clearances." This was a kind of ethnic cleansing by which the weakened clans people of Scotland were being forced from their land to make way for sheep and the British Wool Societies bid to corner the world market on wool. Like so many others, my father's ancestors were Presbyterian, not Jacobite, but because they would not take up arms against their Jacobite neighbors, they were guilty by association. My grandfather, A. T. Fraser, migrated to Alberta in 1902 as a young steel engineer and built many bridges and structures, including the steel frame of the Alberta legislative buildings. He was a loyal Presbyterian and for years taught the adult Bible class at Clearwater, east of Leduc, Alberta. When the United Church of Canada was formed in 1924, he proclaimed, "They may call it the United Church, but I'll dee a Presbyterian!"

My father left home when he was 19. He had wanted to be a medical doctor, but his chore of milking 18 cows twice a day was getting in the way. He bought a hopeless dream farm in 1932 for $350, in order to get ahead. My dad was a hardworking, quiet Scotsman. He enjoyed nature's details and ways and had a genuine respect for people, especially for those who, he said, "faced circumstances." Our farm was a frequent stop for unemployed travelers during the 1930s who were seeking food and shelter, as it was only a short walk from the rail line on which many travelled. The only farmhand whom Dad ever employed was a man crippled with polio. Fred had one hand that worked and always joked that "he was one good hand!" He was a family friend and frequent visitor until his death.

Dad never retired from what became the love of his life, farming. Only Alzheimer's would interrupt his gentle journey with the land and livestock, two years before he died. My twin sister and her husband were between jobs and moved home to take care of Dad so that he didn't have to leave the farm. He died in 1999. A very real part of my interest in hospitality comes from my own ancestors, for whom it was a lifestyle.

My self-conscious journey into "hospitality, the stranger, and pedagogy" began 25 years ago as I studied graduate theology. On the one hand, studying the fringe Confessing

Church, I felt like a kid in a candy story, examining the advocacy and practice of freedom and peace and revolutionary notions of the separation of church and state among the 16th-century Anabaptists. I have ever since been particularly interested in teaching history from the perspective of its silences, recognizing that the subplots and edges of history have particular significance for pastors and people helpers. On the other hand, paradoxically, my own peace and freedom were in decline. I had an experience similar to those of some of my students in that the more I studied about God, the more of an abstraction They became. One well-published professor would always end his sessions on theology with "And there you have it folks!" At the time, I felt that my unspoken, angry protests that "No, I don't have it at all, whatever *it* is!" were a kind of rebellion, which served to further alienate. I often felt drained and sometimes even schizophrenic trying to find personal meaning in theological systems meant for another time and place. The sense of alienation was further magnified as I realized that often such systems, even in their own time and space, divided up the world into warring camps of advocacy rather than drawing it together. I too wanted to scream!

In my current role as president of a small theological college, I have continued this struggle. I have come to see that these alienations arise in part from the unholy marriage between Enlightenment rationalism and the 'kerygmatic' paradigm[20] that has dominated Christian higher education in the West. In my view, the reductionistic tendencies within Enlightenment epistemologies damage not only the hope and wonder so central to the life of faith, but also the relational, incarnational nature of truth that valorizes our very humanness. Human life, I think, by its nature, cannot be made to conform to objectivist notions of knowledge without being first divested of its humanness. Yet much ministry formation, particularly in my own evangelical tradition, continues to focus on classroom academic experience. Too frequently we produce

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[20] While the word *kerygma* (from Greek *kerussein*; lit., "to herald or proclaim") refers to the proclamation of the "story" of Jesus Christ with the Hellenization of Christianity, "story" was collapsed to propositional truths. *Kerygmatic paradigm* refers to this later tendency in Western Christianity to reduce *faith* to propositional statements about specified contents of *the faith*. Such reductions of faith are found in the history of creeds (or statements of faith) from *The Apostles Creed* to the present day. See Phillip Shaff, *Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993). Available also in *Christian Classics Ethereal Library* at http://www.ccel.org/download.html?url=/ccel/schaff/creeds2.doc

religious technicians familiar with words and traditions but without authenticity. To echo Willinsky, theological education has not been so much the great redeemer of wholeness as the tireless chronicler of what divides us.[21] Is a less exclusionary pedagogy possible? Perhaps there are possibilities. I suspect, however, that whatever they are will be found in places where theological education, particularly in its Western form, on the whole, has not ventured. I think there are emergent possibilities in a kind of reflective, communal conversation in which the focus of theological education is not to observe, manage, or handle texts (personal, relational, sacred, and otherwise), but to encourage presence with them, however they arrive. This is part of a hopeful search in what I sense to be my call as a theological educator, which I will explore in more detail later.

My journey to engage in this study has also been shaped by retrospective glances, experiences of estrangement and hospitality that "keep arriving" (Gadamer). I'm a twin, but before the days of ultrasound, my mother had already been rolled back into the recovery room before it was evident that I wanted to make an entrance into the world. Mother's introduction of me as her "little afterthought" may have served to make light of a critical incident in her life, but it cast painful doubts at times about belonging and just how roomy the world was. I am also deeply grateful for what my parents considered love, which also bears healing. In addition, we were poor without knowing it.

While I grew up, we never owned a television. Entertainment revolved around social life, visiting between farms, entertaining city folk who dropped by. I learned about the rhythms of life and death. We took care of my grandma in her senior years at our place. When she emigrated to Canada, she left behind being an "English lady." Nevertheless, she regularly hosted my sister and me for "tea" (lemonade) and her favorites, delicately made onion sandwiches. I felt very close to her as a five-year-old, and when she died, home seemed very strange to me. A similar estrangement occurred in Grade 2 when my best friend Harry was killed. As he got off the school bus, he was struck by a drunk driver. I think I learned to be a little fatalistic. But, equally, I believe

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[21] John Willinsky, *Learning to Divide the World: Education at Empire's End* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. xxxx.

that these things triggered a spiritual imagination, a quest for meaning in the face of life's precariousness and discontinuity.

My first school experience was rough. My Grade 1 report card reveals that I missed 61 days of school that year, most of them prior to Christmas. As the youngest in a family of five children, I was nurtured and protected, perhaps overly so, by a loving mother who didn't want me to leave home. I was quite competent at playing the game to oblige her! I struggled with reading and didn't learn to read on my own until Grade 4, when Miss Chevalier started me in a remedial program. Reading quickly became a lifelong love affair, starting with the Burgess Books, which actually resonated with the rural life with which I was so familiar. Was this experience partly due to an inhospitable pedagogy, finally made hospitable? I think so. I need no convincing of the importance of personal meaning as a framework for literacy (Freire).

I experienced deep estrangement in Grade 5. I had all kinds of problems that year. My teacher was one of the wealthiest people in town. She had no children of her own, and I honestly believe that she didn't like children, especially poor children. I had taken to protecting a friend, Andrew, who was from a large, poor family. His lunches were small, and so was he. He also had serious bladder problems and, consequently, even bigger problems with schoolyard bullies. I got into a number of fights that year and came home with bloody fists on more than one occasion. I didn't pick fights, but I was big, and I learned that if you looked like you could beat someone up, you probably could. Andrew didn't have to fight many battles that year—or, actually, for as long as he was in school. That was also the year I was strapped. I had never been spanked, and it was the first corporal punishment by an adult that I ever experienced. At the time bullying looked very attractive. We were all playing catch in the hall one rainy day, but another boy and I were singled out as examples. I quickly forgot the sting of the strap and for a while even turned the public shaming into a virtue: I was tough; in fact, singled out as tough. In retrospect, I could easily have become the schoolyard bully. I didn't, thanks, I believe, to the tension that my parents created: Mother had always taught us to turn the other cheek, and Father, to defend the weak. I have, however, had difficulty forgetting my teacher's cruel, alienating words: "Ronald, get up here while I strap you. You'll never amount to

anything!" I still wonder about the sources of personal estrangement I experienced that year. Many times I've caught myself trying to prove her wrong. I also know what it means to be unfairly treated. Looking back, I know that it has contributed to deep disdain for bureaucratic approaches to life and relationships. Rules administered without a context, simply because they are in the policy manual, can be cruel and abusive.

My Grade 8 teacher was fresh out of university. She was the first teacher on whom I ever had a crush. She was way too smart and too beautiful to be teaching social studies. I figured that if history could be as interesting as she made it, I'd study it forever. I have. That year (1962) we also practiced diving under our desks when the village air-raid siren sounded and imagined what it would be like to sizzle. It was the Cuban Missile Crisis. One afternoon our science teacher assured us that the nuclear bombs that would explode over Northern Alberta would be over in a flash, that "we wouldn't feel a thing. It would be like a spot of water hitting a hot fry pan!" We spent a lot of time in science, talking about the technicalities of a nuclear bomb. It generated great fear and helplessness. I think it was the first time that I felt that maybe the whole world could be an inhospitable, cruel place. I just wanted to be home.

Mr. Kumish treated me like a college student in Grade 10, and Mr. Berezansky passed on a passion for craftsmanship in woodworking. Dick Staples, principal extraordinaire, gave us a passion to settle for nothing less than our best. He wouldn't allow us to chew gum in Math 30—in the 1960s! Daily he would walk around the class though, one at a turn, to ask if he could help with any problems from our homework, and he would stand by the door every Friday to wish us a good and safe weekend. One January afternoon during my spare he called me into his office. He wanted to inquire about my vocational plans. At that point I had none. He suggested that I consider being a teacher. He also offered the compliment that I had done an excellent job in various leadership roles in Student Council, in the Campus Life club, and on sports teams and that I should use the obvious leadership ability I had, perhaps in administration. That continues to be a particularly hospitable and integrative point in my life. Its empowerment lingers, even though it happened over 40 years ago. I remember leaving his office feeling 10 feet tall. They were not just words. And his was not just an invitation

to "Come into my office a moment!" Rather, it was an invitation to "Come into my life!"—an invitation to come alongside, to walk together with him. He has been a model for me as I seek to empower students, to help them to freely embrace their call. Somehow, naming the school after him seems irrelevant to the worlds he has opened and helped to shape through several generations of his protégés.

My experience as a student has been defined by the presence of teachers, or their absence. Both were my teachers, in many cases unawares. Hospitality, and its absence, has played a significant role in my education. This has produced inevitable questions and desires around hospitality, to bring to light what is not: If I use hospitality as a lens through which to examine my world, what would it look like? How would the Stranger appear? As a gift to be embraced? Or an enemy to be excluded? How can I host the Other who is already present? How can the places in which I spend my days as an educator become more hospitable? How do I encourage hospitable practice in these places, where students are invited across boundaries and encouraged to invite others across them, as well as to establish and respect boundaries? Hospitality though is considerably more than a lens or a place; it is a practice. It is the practice of welcome, of inviting into one's presence, of making room and time; and, above all, it is the practice of being present with Other, whoever, however, and whenever they arrive. What does it mean to be hospitable? How do learners experience Presence in their relationships with teachers and with the many and varied texts of education and life?

Ethical Reflections

"Why is the practice of hospitality helpful or useful for the teaching-learning situation?" I have been asked this question on several occasions recently. My initial reasons for looking at the loss of hospitable practice in Western culture colored the way that I initially responded. My assumption was that Western education has had at least some complicity in the wide-scale violence of the 20th century. If, I thought, hospitality could just be inscribed in pedagogy particularly, all might be well. Of course, single

solutions, as David Jardine points out, are themselves one of the enduring issues behind the violence of the 20th century, largely "because of the odd absence of 'x.'"[22]

The question of the *usefulness of hospitality* in a very real way misappropriates it, if not ethical virtue more generally. Hospitality is first experienced as a practical virtue (Lat. *virtus*; lit., "courage")—that which enables human beings to move toward the communally human good or *telos,* a perpetually unfolding interdependence.[23] Hospitality is not a technical problem to be solved, or even particularly to provide solutions or usefulness that lead to the closing up of life and relations. Hospitality is nested with a particular ethical presence in the world that might best be described as openness to life, including the Stranger who escapes notice, the null site, what or who is not embraced, with whom we live interdependently already, though without acknowledgement.[24] Hospitality is not primarily a skill, which might reduce it to a kind of exotic or fashionable commodity, complete with particular "skill sets" to get along with a Stranger, speak her/his language, know her/his customs, and so forth for the purposes of technical mastery, economic profit, or some other personal benefit. Hospitality is not the result of technical mastery that closes down the risk-laden world that relations forever are. Rather, it is a way of being and conversing that the Stranger forever requires. Hospitality therefore involves the reconstituting of the self, particularly the Western self, as it surrenders its autonomy and mastery, so that whoever lies beyond the horizons of my own experience, together with all of their ambiguities, will be freely received as Other rather than feared in Otherness. Once made useful, hospitality becomes degenerative, as some foreclosure about, for instance, what the characteristics or qualities of Other are sought.

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[22] David W. Jardine, Patricia Clifford, and Sharon Friesen, *Back to Basics of Teaching and Learning: Thinking the World Together* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2003). p. 136.

[23] Alisdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1981).

[24] Elliot Eisner, *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*, 3rd ed. (New York: MacMillan College Publications, 1993). Eisner's notion that what lies "off stage" may be as important in educational enterprise as what is in full sight, especially in a culture where education is designed to serve the economy, and to do so efficiently, with "hardly a nod . . . given to the spirit" (pp. 96-97).

There are deep connections in this with pedagogy. For one thing, violence proceeds from such fear, in which case the function of education is to train people to obey the familiar. As David G. Smith observes, it means, "Kids, this is the game we are playing; if you fail, it is because there is something wrong with you, not the game itself."[25] Such dictation of life, with corresponding violence for 'being different,' not only exists in the language and posture of colonial empires, including current US foreign policy, but also echoes from classroom to playground in the contemporary scourge of bullying. Fear of social otherness is part of the long history of violence in the West, which goes back to the Renaissance. Eventually, children are "fragmented out" as an "object to be studied," in the emergence of the scientific discipline of *Child Study* in the 19th century.[26]

An even deeper connection, however, between hospitality and pedagogy is this: If pedagogy is about the ethical opening up of life, embracing it as it presents and announces itself and arrives all on its own (not as it is dictated and circumscribed by interests other than itself, including my ego), then hospitality *is* pedagogical. That is, if life is always everywhere bearing witness from beyond one's experience (Gadamer), then hospitality as pedagogy is not primarily about being helpful to teaching and learning, but, rather, is an intricate, joy- and pain-filled sojourn of living in the presence of whatever and whoever shows up. As David Jardine says, "In education, once our understanding of being human becomes estranged from the ongoing, interpretive narrative of everyday life (a narrative rife with possibilities, ambiguity, and risk) and is reconstructed into an object ripe for technical manipulation, . . . we begin the horrifying task of chasing our own tails with the hope of eventually closing down the risk-laden conversation that such a narrative involves and requires."[27]

Another question concerning ethical reasons for an inquiry of hospitality and pedagogy has to do with "Why such an inquiry, *now, at this point in time*?" Beyond the

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[25] David Geoffrey Smith, *Trying to Teach in a Season of Great Untruth* (Rotterdam/Taipei: Sense Publishers, 2006), p. 72.

[26] Ibid. See W. Kessen, *The Child* (New York: Wiley, 1965) referenced here.

[27] David W. Jardine, *Under the Tough Old Stars: Ecopedagogical Essays* (Brandon, VT: The Foundation of Educational Renewal, Inc., 2000), p. 125.

philosophical turn to ethics,[28] I think there are two contemporary currents—the advent of technology and economic globalization—that make a discussion of hospitality particularly relevant in the early 21st century. Both of these realities are part of the unquestioned texts, the "common sense" of relational consciousness bound tightly in instrumental reason and autonomous freedom, that dominate the West. Instrumental reason is the notion that there is a reasonable, technical solution to every problem, so that "research and development" for new "devices" are the paths to human communal flourishing. Under the regime of instrumental reason, virtue (hospitality included) might easily become a tool to serve reason and autonomy, invalidating all other traditions but reason and autonomy. As Alisdair MacIntrye shows, with echoes of Hans-Georg Gadamer, the Enlightenment experiment was profoundly inhospitable in casting aside "tradition" and "virtue" in favor of what appeared to be trust in "pure reason," as if reason itself could be detached from the "tradition of rationality" of which it is a part. Hospitality as a practical virtue, offers, in itself, considerable resistance to singular explanations of all sorts, by daring to "entertain" contrary, communal visions of life.

Albert Borgmann has spent most of his academic life problematizing what he calls *the device paradigm,* a fruit of instrumental reason. His recurring theme is what he calls the "invisibility" of technology in contemporary culture.[29] He wants us to see the ways that it subordinates nearly every other cultural practice, from the dinner table to the civil commons, to its controlling assumptions. People in contemporary technocratic cultures have trouble seeing technologies impact on relationships, not simply because it is difficult (impossible?) to see the paradigms in which they are inscribed. Rather, technology is built on the concept of the device, a small apparatus that grows smaller and ever more efficient at delivering a single good. At its best, technology is designed to disappear.

In illustrating this, Borgmann invites us to consider where we find warmth and contrasts hearth with furnace.[30] In pre-technological homes, the hearth (Latin, *focus*) was

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[28] See, for instance, Beatrice Hanssen, Marjorie Garber, and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, eds., *The Turn to Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

[29] Albert Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life: A Philosophical Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 41.

[30] Ibid.

both the center of the home and the center of household activities. Furnaces, on the other hand, have become smaller and are located as far out of the way as possible, delivering heat from a corner in the basement. An invisible hearth is a contradiction in terms; an invisible furnace is a technological achievement.

The real challenge to our relational consciousness, Borgmann argues, is that the promise of technology is liberation from "focal concerns" and "focal practices," or as he calls it "disburdenment." "Devices" or "concealed" machinery replace relationships, so that consumption occurs without consumptions context.[31] Ironically, these very focal concerns and focal practices have the power to link humans to the earth and to one another. The hearth had to be tended, which required a certain watchfulness. It could throw sparks into straw. When the glowing embers turned to cold ashes, it had neighbors to refresh it. It had children who had to learn 'fire' in intimate settings. It was tied to the rhythm of the seasons, with a chimney for the local chimney sweep to clean in the spring and a woodbox for the woodcutter to fill in the fall. It had food to cook and warmth to gather around. With the advent of the furnace we are disburdened from the need to procure heat with our own hands and skill, and in the process we have become disconnected from the "wider horizons of social engagement" that open up the world.[32] I am so disburdened that I couldn't tend a furnace even if I had to!

Thus disburdenment comes at a price: "disengagement" and "disconnection."[33] Devices can only be purchased, not tended. They produce commodities that can only be consumed, without reference to connections because the connections are invisible. Heidegger's discussion of "standing reserve" (*Bestand*) is relevant here: "In our time, things are not even regarded as objects, because their only important quality has become their readiness for use . . . their only meaning lies in their being available to serve some end that will itself also be directed towards getting everything under control. . . .

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[31] Ibid., p. 47.

[32] Ibid., p. 42.

[33] There are many other cultural ramifications of the device paradigm, but we are interested here in Borgmann's primary thrust, which is about how the "relatedness of the world" is not only replaced by a machine, but also "concealed by it." Such is also the challenge of parenting in that the "wisdom" of the World Wide Web can easily reduce parenting to "supplying equipment" for children.

Everything is ordered to stand by so that it may be on call for further ordering."[34] In this account, control, not connection, is the goal of technology, so that the more technology I can afford, the greater the possibility for disengagement and disconnection. Tools are never just tools. A poignant marker of this occurred this morning as I purchased a pine two-by-four at the local lumberyard. As I slid my Interac card through the self-serve checkout, ironically, not a single human interaction was required of me. The transaction was faceless. And it was only later, as I stroked the blue-grey grain, that I felt drawn to ask a different question than "How do I make the best use of this?" The question became, "What does this gift (of time, of sun's energy, of ocean breezes, of rain, of other dead trees and earthworms and fungi, of the pine beetle, of people in its journey), require of me?" To press this in Gadamer's terms, I cannot *possess* the world that playfully invites me by "multifarious voices"[35] (shared inheritances, ancestries, genealogies, traditions, etc.) to give myself to what I undergo as guest, present in and through the world.

What, then, holds the world together when the focal meanings and "multifarious voices" have been concealed by devices? Or in Jacques Ellul's terms, what becomes of the human imaginary and hope when *means* take precedence over *ends*? For even as technology disburdens us, Borgmann argues, it also erases a sense of creaturely contingency, "engagement with communal contexts,"[36] an erasure that is toxic to families, communities, and cultures. The liveliness of human life is found in focal things such as hearths, things that address with a "commanding presence"[37] of their own, and call forth from human beings disciplines that humble and ennoble the human condition, living in the presence of the chimney sweep, the woodcutter, and children. Borgmann is no Luddite, nostalgically promoting an anti-technological stance sometimes suspect in Wendel Berry, for instance. His concern is human flourishing within current technological reality and with how the device paradigm eclipses it. Now the tools of

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[34] Or consumption. Or exploitation. See Hubert Drefus, "Highway Bridges and Feasts: Heidegger and Borgmann on How to Affirm Technology." Retrieved February 2002 from http://socrates.berkeley.edu-hdrefus/htm//paper_highway.html

[35] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, Trans. (London: Continuum, 1989), p. 295.

[36] Borgmann (1984), p. 47.

[37] Ibid.

careful power, the practices that enabled people to come alongside creation's inherent power, to live interdependently in harmony with it and one another, have been replaced by the tools of regardless power, the buttons and switches that valorize the autonomistic power of a plug-and-play consumerism. Regimes of truth (Foucault) or discourses around how people are feeling, relating, and reacting can be carefully rationalized to manipulate consumption. The head of Philips Design, part of the massive consumer electronics firm, recently informed the *Economist* that "consumers want to be omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent, with the maximum comfort and freedom and with minimum effort," and that the firm was developing products accordingly.[38] In this rendering of life, humans simply await autonomous command and consumption. But do we? Or do we seek interdependent, engaged presence? Could hospitality itself become a focal concern to unveil the significance and dignity of whoever shows up to invade my space and time? . Could it become a focal practice that stretches generosity, empowers "grassroots-and-everyday compassion?" Hospitality as open handedness and open heartedness to the One facing me, in this moment, may be part of the resistance available to the faceless, "invisible hand" (Adam Smith) of the market (a.k.a. "calculated greed") that underwrites Donald Trump's counsel to all who deserve wealth: "Think Big. Kick Butt."[39]

A part of the argument for a pedagogy of hospitality, then, relates to how human beings might be present in the prevailing technological paradigm where disengagement eclipses presence. When Borgmann turns to this question, his words are strangely familiar: "Our morally crucial circumstances are the exact mirror image of those that made for martyrs: where theirs were overt, ours are concealed; where theirs were mortal to their bodies, ours are lethal to the spirit; and where theirs tore them out of their normal life, ours channel our lives within the unquestioned banks of technological culture."[40] This could have been written by the Desert Fathers, with the exception of the last few

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[38] Quotation in an article entitled "Reinventing Europe" in *The Economist.* Posted November 2003; retrieved March 2007 from http://www.stormfront.org/forum/showthread.php/economist-reinventing-europe87606.html

[39] The facelessness of greed stands in stark contrast to the Presence of the face among those who have limited resources. One of my sisters, returning from a trip to East Africa, was awestruck by a gift of chickens from strangers who would surely be justified in feeding themselves. I had similar experiences among the hill tribes of Northern Thailand and Myanmar.

[40] Ibid.

words. They saw great dangers in the security and affluence of the Constantinian era and warned their contemporaries to run for their lives from the entitlement that rendered life faceless.

Here Borgmann recognizes both the power of technology to conceal the deep meanings within culture and the power of those deep meanings (focal concerns) to put technology in its place. He is no technological determinist,[41] but understands the encumbrance of suffering and even the compassionate use of technology in relieving suffering. These encumbrances are opportunities for wonder and play that are implicit in hospitality, or, as Borgmann calls it, "the culture of the table": "When it comes to the trouble of cooking a meal and gathering my loved ones around the table, we accept it not only in practice but also in principle, because eating, shorn of its real preparation and personal involvements, has lost its sacramental horizons."[42] What Borgmann is proposing here is not a dismantling of technology: "It is rather the recognition and restraint of the paradigm. To restrict the paradigm is to restrict it to its proper sphere, . . . the background or periphery of focal things and practices. . . . The concerns that move us to undertake a reform of the paradigm lead to reforms within the paradigm as well. Since a focal practice discloses the significance of things and the dignity of humans, it engenders a concern for the safety and well-being of things and persons."[43] The Desert Fathers would have called this *ascesis*, the willingness to embrace the mundane demands of the encumbered life; as well as suffering, the willingness to be drawn by the interests of embrace, and to forfeit personal comfort to do so. *Ascesis* is a "long obedience in the same direction" (Nietzsche), where in a technological age of instant, effortless, anonymous pleasure, I move beyond being a voyeur and accept the invitation of "being

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[41] Borgmann's understanding of technological dependency parallel's Marshall McLuhan's portrayal of technology as being united with a form of numbness brought on by habitual practice, which results in technological devices slipping from view, so that *the medium becomes the message.* It also bears some affinity with Jacques Ellul's portrayal of technology as a form of unconscious religious zealotry, captured in the worship of *Techne.* However, Borgmann makes every attempt to keep ideas about technology grounded in their bodily world, recognizing that the elevation of technology to a world of its own making is the problem with which he is trying to be "encumbered."

[42] Borgmann (2002), "Contingency and Grace in an Age of Science and Technology," in *Theology Today*, April 2002. Retrieved March 2006 from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3664/is_200204/ai-n9068760/pg_11

[43] Borgmann (1984), p. 220.

human" (Latin, *humus*; lit., "of the earth"). This includes the suffering that enables the feast of full presence and participation in life and relationships to go on and deepen. Borgmann refers to *engagement* as "fidelity to daily discipline, the broadening of sensibility, the learning of a skill, the profound interaction of human beings, and the preservation and development of tradition."[44] In fact, it is in the "practice of engagement" that "the rule of technology" finds resistance.[45] This is no utopian dream. "Amazingly," Borgmann says, "the world of personal engagements and engaging things is still right around us, as a close possibility, if not as an actual practice."[46]

In engaging the world hospitably, a world that is already present, my freedom (autonomously defined) and entitlements are exposed, by virtue of exposure to a larger world. So I might think twice about my demand for health care, knowing that the demand for doctors in the Western world has gutted many parts of the developing world of its entire medical infrastructure. In Ghana, for instance, even rudimentary care is now nonexistent, whereas once it was a model for Africa, and now immunization programs that create even greater dependency are "models of philanthropy" in the West: "You can save a life for less than the price of a cup of coffee."[47] I might think twice about going for coffee if I better understand the world of coffee and hot chocolate, with its multifarious cries of suffering. Instead, we might boil up some mint tea, with local mint.

Recipe for Mint Tea

Boil 1-2 cups of water per person to be served.
Add a half cup of mint leaves (garden grown or as a house plant).
Steep for 5-7 minutes.
Pour and Enjoy!

The argument for a pedagogy of hospitality is clearly not in hospitality as a mere skill, a *techne* of pedagogy, to be applied in "three easy steps," or not. It is, rather, in the possibility of hospitality itself, as the outcropping of hospitable being, cultivated by

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[44] Borgmann (1984), p. 214.
[45] Borgmann (1984), p. 207.
[46] Ibid.
[47] This amazingly inhospitable equation is what drew Bill Gates into the world of African philanthropy, making him *Time Magazine's* "Man of the Year, 2005" and unleashing a host of issues that arise when human issues are not seen in all their intricate interrelatedness.

educators, a particular stance that is best described as "openness to the Stranger." With echoes of Gadamer again, what Borgmann says of all focal practices can be said of hospitality. To allow it "to radiate transformatively into its environment is not to exact some kind of service from it but to grant it its proper eloquence."[48]

In many ways it would be much easier to walk the well-worn and time-honored path where human rights, economic justice, and ecological well-being occupied center stage. But I think that these very legitimate and urgent issues become considerably more robust in the presence of the people they actually affect—most often the stranger. Through events in my life I have discovered that the stranger was also me. I know I have also contributed to the estrangement of others. This inquiry is not that of an unaffected mind or heart, but a part of my own social/spiritual journey with the Other. How do I be hospitable, inscribed as I am in an exclusionary culture?

Hospitality and the Stranger: Framing the Problem

The Huron word *kanata* (Canada) means "community" or "gathering of huts." The adoption of place names in the language of the original inhabitants marked a new development in the colonial era of Western history and hinted at a certain hospitality in the earliest reaches of Canadian social development.[49] Despite this and the meaning of *kanata* itself, Canadian children are taught, forcefully, "Don't talk to strangers! Don't take candy from strangers!" The Stranger is distrusted, perhaps seen as an intruder or an alien invader, certainly one who interrupts the flow, the stability of life. The Stranger remains unwanted, unknown, and largely misunderstood. The Stranger frequently operates as a boundary marker for people who are trying to identify themselves over and against others. For instance, deep in the soul or psyche of most Canadians is the awareness that "I'm not American!" Just as Greeks had their barbarians; Jews their Gentiles; Europeans their exotic, sometimes noble, sometimes devilish, savages, Canadians have their Americans. The Western myth of the frontier epitomizes these borderlands that define *us*, usually against *them*. As a friend of mine once said, "Most

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[48] Borgmann (1984), p. 222.

[49] See http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr./info106_e.html (a Government of Canada website_. Retrieved December 28, 2007.

people don't mind being a 'settler,' but it takes great courage to overcome the fear of a strange land to be a pioneer."[50] My identification of the strange and the Stranger, however, may say more about me than of the one who shows up. When Pilgrim encountered Pequot on the shores of Massachusetts and asked, "Who is this stranger?" he didn't realize that the native Pequot was asking exactly the same question of the black-hatted arrivals from Plymouth who were pulling their boats onto the beach. As Richard Kearney observes, "Strangers are almost always other to each other."[51]

Experiences of Estrangement and Hospitality

I am a stranger when I am Other to someone else, and estrangement is a very complex experience. As I mentioned, I missed 61 days in Grade 1. I was physically sick with fear of my Grade 1 teacher, who served in World War II. She terrified me. The fear was possibly nurtured by the (over-?) protection of my mother. Over time though, I began to realize that my teacher was more like my Grandma, as her shrill directives in my head gave way to her gentle stroking of the back of my head. I'm still puzzled by the estrangement. Was I the stranger? Or was she? Had the War made her forget the innocence of being at home? Had mother's fierce protection of me translated itself into estrangement? The terror of being left alone enveloped me. Where did it come from? Was it primordial? None of the explanations made me feel any better at the time, but the presence of a gentle, open hand seemed to settle me.

Open hands, open doors, open hearts, open homes—this the language of hospitality. Yet these words, along with "Welcome!" making room, and "Come on in!" have largely been lost in contemporary speech. When *hospitality* is used in Western culture, the common thoughts are not of welcoming strangers, sharing the food, drink, and shelter that is part of life. Rather, what is pictured is a family picnic or a pleasant get-together with friends and acquaintances. Or when I am invited to a party, I may bring a hospitality gift, signaling gratitude, possibly some kind of reciprocal welcome, or perhaps

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[50] John Bergman was a psychologist and pastor who worked with alcoholics and drug addicts for over 50 years on Edmonton's 97th Street. He said this in reference to trying to find new ways of treatment.

[51] Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods, and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 3.

a payment of some kind. Hospitality conjures up pictures of the Canadian hospitality industry—hotels, motels, restaurants, night clubs, entertainment, or cultural events. This may even speak to the experience that being a stranger has qualifications and that hospitality has conditions: a valid credit card. Perhaps a hospitality committee comes to mind in a school staff, a church, or an office, whose task it is to coordinate social activities. Or hospitality suites at conventions or in sports and entertainment venues in the West, where hospitality as welcome frequently becomes "welcome-for-a-reason": I need your favor, power, influence, or wealth.

These understandings of hospitality reflect Henri Nouwen's notice that, for most of us, hospitality conjures up images of "tea parties, bland conversation, and general atmosphere of coziness."[52] It is predominantly reserved for those we like, or at least those who are like us.

Etymological Considerations of Hospitality and the Stranger

Hospitality in Western experience may have little to do with the strangers that it points to etymologically. In modern English, *hospitality* implies only one end of an exchange between a guest and a host. We may even think of the two words as antonyms. In contrast, *philoxenia*, a Greek word that translates to hospitality, keeps the stranger in view. *Philoxenia* meant literally "love of the stranger," from *phileo*, meaning "to love," and *xenia*, meaning "stranger." Who the stranger is, is even more ambiguous in the etymological roots of both English words *guest* and *host*, coming as they do from the same Latin word *hospes* (genative *hospitis*), which has both meanings. This points us in a very important direction that I will carry throughout this project that a stranger and a host are nested together and intertwined. It is intriguing as well that another Latin word in this same constellation, *hostis,* means "stranger," "hostile," or "enemy." The English word *hostility* (verb, *hostio*) means "to give retribution," and *host* (noun—*hostia*) means "victim." The old Latin hymn *O salutaris hostis* is *O saving victim,* and the bread of the Eucharist is the *host.* This connection between the gift of bread and its ability to merge enmity and friendship is common in near and far Eastern cultures, where to share a

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[52] Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Image Books, 1975), p. 66.

common table is to embrace. Bread is a signifier (Baudrillard) of solidarity and friendship. Etymologically, the English word hospitality points in the same direction.

The Problem

In popular Western use, however, the reciprocity signaled earlier disappears. Thus, hospitality associated with the needy, a category with its own history, conjures up thoughts of hostels or hospitals, where highly trained professionals or specialists—doctors, nurses, social workers, psychiatrists, and others—care for homeless or sick people They are specially trained to meet specific needs, but may or may not be hospitable people. Even here, economic considerations are not far from the discussion, as illustrated in discussions about the Canadian health care system. In a similar vein a friend who was visiting his father in palliative care in an American hospital described the situation: "Comfort came *a la carte.* If he wanted a lip swab it was $5.45, a cool cloth was $3.46, and a foot massage was $13.23." He complained, "That was not about care. It was about exacting maximum profit from a dying man." Even when hospitality is associated with health care, jargon such as *waiting lines*, *emergency wait times*, and *treatment queue* seems to eclipse the names and faces of real people seeking care, not merely cure.

For people who are in the game socially and economically, estrangement is not a common experience. There is a certain shame connected to it, and it is therefore something to be avoided or overcome. While strange situations or strange readings may be spoken of, or perhaps strange people, as in "I experienced them as strange," rarely is our personal "otherness" given a voice. I can't think of an occasion when I actually acknowledged or heard acknowledged, "I was the stranger." I have felt it often, but it remains unspoken. Is this because my wealth nurtures my autonomy by making it possible for me to simply purchase what hospitality provides—shelter, meals, health care, and such? Unless my autonomy is stripped away and I require the other to show up, I rarely have opportunity to practice being the Other.

Several Decembers ago on a Friday-evening trip to Edmonton, a storm interrupted my journey. Blowing snow made the icy road impossible to see. My little Honda stalled, and I coasted into the safety of the ditch, out of the way of transport trucks, whose drivers

enjoyed the clearer visibility from eight feet up. Stranded, I used my cell phone to contact my sister-in-law, who lived in Olds for a time, to discover whether she knew anyone I could contact for help. A good Samaritan, known to her but unknown to me, came to rescue me, put me up on a hide-a-bed in his living room, fed me breakfast, then towed my car the next day to his warm garage to dry out the carburetor. In the process of it all, I kept apologizing for inconveniencing him, to the point that he graciously reprimanded me: "Quit running down my gift to you! I have no doubt that were I in the same situation, you would do the same for me." In a sense, my inability to receive the gift offered has helped me to realize that a clue to inhospitality and estrangement might be found in self-sufficiency, which occludes gifts. If that is true, there is no assurance at all that I would open my hand or door if he were in the same situation. The point is that in a market-driven culture, where autonomy is among the defining tropes, depending on the generous provisions of others is difficult. It is accompanied by fears of rejection and sometimes feels quite degrading and even shameful. Was this estrangement an outcropping of my Calvinism? Was Weber right? Did I feel shame because the pursuit of wealth and independence had been sanctified in my life as the highest expression of Divine calling? Is being in need a moral and spiritual condition?[53] Why is asking for help so hard? This experience and others like it of *being the other* and of warm welcome in the midst of isolation or abandonment continue to shape my own response to strangers. It is also why the experience of estrangement as a potentially liberating site for the practice of hospitality is an intriguing possibility. Could it be that 'seeing oneself as Other' is one of the ways the door is left ajar for strangers? I suspect also that this experience of estrangement remains hidden, eclipsed by fear and shame, without the mediation of robust and intertwining ethical and spiritual meanings. Chapter 3 includes a more extensive discussion of this.

Embracing the stranger in a sacral way, finally, as my Grade 1 teacher and my gracious host at Olds did, has a long history. Good Egyptians, in appealing to the gods of

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[53] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1958). Weber connects the spread of a specific type of Protestantism, Calvinism, as the religious underwriter of the Western quest for prosperity. Wealth is sign of one's election and faithfulness to God's call. Poverty is a sign of one's nonelection.

the underworld when they die, should say, "I have given bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothing to the naked, and a boat to the shipwrecked mariner."[54] In Buddhist teaching any sacrifice that is made in the presence of an unfed guest is in vain and might just as well not be made. As alluded to above, the ancient Greeks were taught *philoxenia* ("love of the stranger"). The stranger was under the protection of Zeus, and one of life's great opportunities was to offer hospitality to a stranger in the hope of establishing a sacramental relationship. Along similar lines in both Hebrew and Christian traditions, encounter with a stranger holds the potential for Divine encounter: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so some have entertained angels unawares."[55] The premise of much wisdom regarding the stranger is that *all* people, friend or enemy, are manifestations of the Divine, or embody that possibility, making them truly "Other." Where do doors open to people? How do we live in the Presence of the life that shows up, whenever, wherever, and however it does? What are the conditions, in the West particularly, by which the Stranger is not welcomed or not seen to be welcomed?

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[54] E. A. Wallis Budge, Trans., *The Book of the Dead: The Papyrus of Ani* (London: British Museum of Antiquities, 1895). Posted October 8, 2001; retrieved April 28, 2008, from http://www.scribd.com/doc2527600/Egyptian-Book-the-Dead

[55] Hebrews 13:2.

CHAPTER 2:

PHILOSOPHICAL/THEOLOGICAL ETHICS LITERATURE REVIEW

Inhospitality is surely not exclusive to the Western world. It *is*, however, a Western problem. Much of the violence, including nuclear proliferation, the weaponization of many nations, and now the possibility of outer space (interesting term when it intimately affects every human being) has roots in the West and its ideologies. That inhospitality has been a primary export of the West to the East is illustrated in Cambodia.[56] Whereas the West has enjoyed unparalleled prosperity, it has also been profoundly inhospitable. How has the social consciousness of Western culture been constructed to create such estrangement? As T. S. Elliot has poignantly and poetically asked:

> When the stranger says: "What is the meaning of the city?"
> "Do you huddle together because you love each other?"
> What will you answer?
> "We all dwell together to make money from each other."
> Or "This is a community."[57]

It is not that the problem of inhospitality goes unrecognized, nor the issues of otherness and identity that form something of a backdrop for it. Research, political and economic experimentation, and poetry and literature of all kinds are dedicated to how we embrace life that shows up or exclude and abandon it. In this research I sought to understand the philosophical and theological sources of this particular challenge, with an

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[56] Pol Pot, educated in France, came to power in Cambodia to engage his own brand of 'social engineering' (a Western notion) thanks to the massive carpet bombing by US B-52s of rural Cambodia from 1969-1973. Pol Pot's dream was to restore the benighted Khmer people to the glory and prestige of their pre-Buddhist past. A thousand years earlier, made prosperous by the cultivation of rice, an advanced civilization dominated the mainland of southeast Asia.

[57] T. S. Elliot, *Complete Poems and Plays: 1909 -1950* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1978), p. 103.

emerging appreciation for how these sources regularly eclipse the presence of the Other. This research has helped me to understand that the very possibility of Other showing up is constricted within the monolithic totalities frequently prescribed in philosophical and theological sources. Indeed, they are already present. To assist in exploring how relationality has been considered in Western thought and life, these sources need to remain in view.

To assist in exploring how relationality has been considered in Western thought, I have chosen three broad categories of suggestions, particularly as they are identified by philosophical and theological ethicists; namely, *universalist options*, *communitarian options*, *and postmodern options.* The first two find hope in the modernist belief that the world can be healed of things that have gone wrong, that through the twin strategies of social design and an emphasis on freedom for all, things can be repaired. As Zygmunt Bauman puts it, modernity's credo is "the right design and the final argument can be, must be, and will be found."[58] The postmodern option is suspicious immediately that the designs and arguments in the modernist options have a specific situatedness that is produced in the West. It therefore seeks to see not only the West's own complicity in past inhospitality and violence, but also that the very issues may be perpetuated by things such as the right design and the final argument. Postmodernism's hope seems to lie in acquiring larger, or different, identities than those that stand over the world. There is much more to these issues, but this will suffice to give some general trajectory to the literature review. Even the categories universalist, communitarian, and postmodern point to a certain category of social arrangement theory. Although I am primarily interested in social agency, particularly as it relates to how we live in the presence of whoever shows up—the Stranger—social arrangements theories provide significant attitudes and establish sightlines and awareness of how hospitality might be practiced—obviously, for I read all of the literature to which I refer below out of an interest for the practical virtue of hospitality as a Western tradition and what this virtue or its absence might portend for education, and theological pedagogy particularly.

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[58] Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p. 9.

Universalist Options

Universalist options suggest that we should control the unchecked proliferation of differences and support the spread of universal values—religious values, democratic values, Enlightenment values, or such—which can alone provide the peaceful coexistence of people. The notion is that affirming differences without common values will lead to chaos and war rather than rich and fruitful diversity. A homogeneity of values cohabits with certain understandings of purity that must never be touched by the pollution of otherness. Much of the rhetoric about the war in Iraq is based on assumptions that democracy, liberty, and freedom as experienced in the West are a universal good. "The path to peace in Iraq is freedom for the Iraqi people" is in many ways a tired shibboleth of half a millennia of Western colonization that too frequently conceals violence (Dussel). By the same token, some who criticize the miscalculations of Western leaders about that war in Iraq also rely on certain universalist notions such as international cooperation to assess why war was necessary at all. Charles Taylor refers to universalist notions as the "politics of equal dignity," which seeks to establish what is universally the same—"an identical basket of rights and immunities"[59]—for all 6.5 billion people.

The quest for hospitality in the Western world is especially poignant in the face of the assured results of the Enlightenment promise, in which, under the guiding hand of reason and technological development, there would be prosperity for all and an end to war and injustice. Immanuel Kant, the greatest proponent of a universalist account of relations based on reason, insists in the essay "Perpetual Peace" that relationships need to be framed in terms of justice. Such justice can be just only if it is derived from "the pure concept of the duty of right, from the *ought* whose principle is given *a priori* by pure reason."[60] Kant argues that the consciousness of the spherical shape of the earth itself holds natural rights and "universal hospitality." As the terms *a priori* and *pure reason* indicate, Kant's sense of relationality based in justice cuts through cultural (social, class,

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59 Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition." In *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, edited by Amy Gutmann, 25-73 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 38.

60 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysical Elements of Justice. Part I of The Metaphysics of Morals*, J. Ladd, Trans. (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), pp. 33f.

gender, et al.) differences because it rests on something independent of any culture. Justice is blind to difference, being administered by *Justidia* ("justice in a blindfold"). In this there is "universal hospitality" that will lead to "perpetual peace." This hospitality, framed in terms of justice, determines how *any and every* freely choosing, autonomous person should act. The focus of relationality is that once a 'reasonable person' knows what the injustice is, that the *a priori ought* of justice informs or tells an autonomous person to treat other persons as autonomous persons, as subjects rather than objects, as ends rather than means. Doing this satisfies relational obligations of justice.[61]

The Kantian account of relationality is laden with historical and cultural particularities of its own. One may endorse a way of relating to others on the basis of Kant's proposal, or one may not. It is a mistake though to assume that it is neutral, unsituated from its own culture, and therefore universal. For one thing the Kantian dream is still to be realized. The great paradox is that in spite of years of study and research on race, class, and gender, the continuing absence of reciprocity or mutuality in human relationships is as fresh as today's news. And in spite of the very careful study of development, the gap between rich and poor in the world has never been wider. The wealthiest fifth of the world's population consume seven eighths of the world's goods and services; the poorest fifth, less than one per cent.[62] The situation invites inquiry about the disconnects between people and their study. Is there an estrangement, implicit in ways of knowing, inscribed in the Enlightenment? What happens to persons and to their common humanity when they are reduced to numeric significance, segments of a pie chart, economic units? Palmer suggests that, after Auschwitz, we cannot assume that an education in the humanities, based in autonomous reason, will produce justice, let alone

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[61] Ibid.

[62] The World Bank's 2005 report gave rosy projections about the economic growth of developing countries, including rising exports. Absent from the report is the fact that the external debt of developing countries has grown from $277 billion in 1971 to $2,730 billion in 2005, including $610 billion since 1997 when the debt crisis was supposed to have been over. It also neglects to mention that economic growth and rising exports are driven by global capital's hunger for cheap labor and predominantly Western consumers hunger for cheap goods, respectively. Statistics retrieved January 2006 from http://siteresouces.worldbank.or/DATASTATISTICS/resources/W0107section4-introPDF. For alternative, opposition voices to the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and the International Monetary Fund and their role in global poverty, see Kevan Danaher and Roger Burbach, Eds., *Globalize This! The Battle Against the World Trade Organization and Corporate Rule* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2000).

humanity. Holding the world at arm's length (objectivism) does not make it available for relationships: "A subject is available for relationship; an object is not."[63] Deutsch has noted that relationships are in largely "unfamiliar territory for modern moral philosophy, dominated as it has been by Kantian concerns and utilitarianism."[64] Max Weber, in a kind of foreshadowing of the social criticism of Ivan Illich, argues that the bureaucratization of the modern world, the sheer scale of the external apparatus (economy, social order, etc.), necessitated depersonalization and emotional detachment. Contemporary culture, maintained as it is by a rule "not moved by sympathy, favor, grace or gratitude," has apparently little room for the stranger, or the practice of hospitality.[65] Hospitality is about facing the Others who arrive and making room and time for them. Miroslav Volf helps to set the table for this notion in his response to notions of Enlightenment relationality that is circumscribed by justice. He contends that "there can be no justice without the will to embrace." His point is that to agree on justice, one needs to make space *in* oneself for the perspective of the other; and to make space for the other, one needs "to want to embrace the other."[66]

In place of Kantian pure reason, John Rawls has approached the idea of "reasonableness" as a foundation for our relationships with other people. What he means by reasonableness is the "the willingness to propose fair terms of cooperation and to abide by them provided others do."[67] To ensure that those who wish to be reasonable will

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[63] Palmer, Parker, *The Courage to Teach* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), pp. 102-103. Palmer's previous exploration of the life among strangers with whom we are interdependent and of the implications for teaching "where every stranger and every strange utterance is met with welcome" is similarly concerned with the role of autonomous objectivism in the struggle for community and connectedness. See *To Know as We are Known* (San Francisco: Harper/Collins, 1993), p. 74. The treatment of the stranger in the previous century gives a certain surreal quality to violence in the 20th century: Stalin's purges, Hitler's rampage, Pol Pot's killing fields, and other skirmishes led to the deaths of at least 180,000,000 people. In addition, hundreds of millions more were thrown into turmoil in other ways and treated as strangers in their own home. Given the sheer scale of potential destruction under the shadow of a mushroom-shaped cloud or biological weapons, can we ever see our world as something other than 'a homeless home'? Aren't we all in a sense strangers?

[64] Elliot Deutsch (1994), On Creative Friendship, in Leroy S. Roumer, Ed., *The Changing Face of Friendship* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), p. 43.

[65] Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization.* A. M. Henderson and T. Parsons, Trans. Originally published 1922 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947).

[66] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), p. 220.

[67] John Rawls, *Political Liberalism: The John Dewey Essays in Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 54.

be fair, Rawls invokes his famous "veil of ignorance," hoping that as people make judgments from the point of view of everyone—that is, come to a relationship as if they were everybody—that an "overlapping consensus" will emerge.[68] Rawlsian ethics, however, suffer the same fate as Kant's. In the end—even at the start—they do not give a neutral account of our relational logic, but are in fact constituted by a whole way of life. They too are creatures of history and have been worked on for many generations. To be sure, their logics do support and reinforce behavior of people who are very much like themselves. Thus liberal notions of social relationships are very fitting for liberal societies, and, as Charles Taylor observes, liberal notions of relations give systematic preference to the view of life in which "human dignity consists in autonomy, that is, in the ability of each person to determine for himself or herself a view of the good life."[69] The question here is this: Can such 'universal' notions give hospitality to the stranger on the edges or outside of liberal democracy? Eric Manchester thinks that the Rawlsian tendency to divorce our relationships from ideological commitments treats religious orientation as an "incidental appendage." We end up with a kind of "regard without knowing," or a hospitality without presence. In the process Rawls's view "could be seen as devaluing the religious elements of care, and therefore of actually treating those in need with less than full dignity and respect for what they value."[70] How will dignity and respect arise, particularly for those who share neither common values about goodness nor a common vision of the good life?

Nel Noddings (1929–) carries this concern directly into pedagogy and sees hope in the embrace of subjectivity, not the abandonment of it. She writes of the three things that matter to her through observing herself: domestic life, learning and writing, and living life as a moral quest.[71] Her work has a deeply phenomenological thread and has become a key reference point for those wanting to reaffirm the ethical and moral

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[68] Rawls, p. 133 ff.

[69] Taylor (1994), p. 57.

[70] Eric Manchester, "Preserving Hospitality through Faith-Based Funding," in *Analytic Teaching*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2002, p. 40-41.

[71] K. O'Toole, "Noddings: To know what matters to you, observe your actions," *fx Stanford Online Report*, February 4, 1998. Retrieved June 30, 2006, from http://news-service.stanford.edu/news/1998/february4/noddings.html. As cited in http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-yearbook/1999/slot.asp

foundations of teaching, schooling, and education more generally. Noddings is closely identified with the ethics of caring and a feminine approach to ethics and moral education.[72] Her argument that caring should be a foundation for ethical decision making starts from the assumption that care is basic to human life, that all people want to be cared for. In this she refutes Kant's duty-based approach to the ethical life, by claiming not that love is higher than duty (as some theologians such as Brunner and Barth have), but that ethical caring is natural. That is, caring is instinctual and unconscious; we do it because, biologically, we (women particularly) care for offspring.[73] She acknowledges, I believe appropriately, that caring in too much education has resulted in caring about (ideas, values, things) rather than caring for:[74] "I have brushed aside *caring about*, and I believe properly so. It is too easy. I can care about the starving children of Cambodia, send five dollars to hunger relief and feel somewhat satisfied . . . *Caring about* always involves a certain benign neglect."[75] Caring about can deteriorate to political self-righteousness and even forms of intervention that are harmful. It can be a kind of washing of the hands in the struggle between the powerful and the powerless, the rich and the poor, which *is* siding with the rich and powerful (Freire). In ethical terms, Noddings suggests that locating moral value in an attitude or a value rather than a relationship, we run the considerable risk of replacing the relationship with an abstraction, an 'it' that actually overshadows the Other.[76] A moral person in this rendering, is not just someone who is attuned to or even grounded in moral values and principles, but, rather, someone

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[72] Nel Noddings. *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

[73] On this point other feminist writers have criticized Noddings' model of caring because it is drawn from the "mother-child relationship," a model that does not help women move beyond fundamentally unequal and dependent relationships. See, for instance, Sarah Lucia Hoagland, "Some Thoughts about *Caring*," in Claudia Card, Ed., *Feminist Ethics* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1991).

[74] Noddings, 1984, p. 135.

[75] Noddings, 1984, p. 112.

[76] Noddings draws heavily from the work of Martin Buber. Later, in 2002, in *Educating Moral People,* she argues that caring-about needs attention, that although we first learn to be cared-for, we come to care-for and to care-about others. This, she argues, is almost certainly the foundation of a sense of justice. "The key, central to care theory, is this: caring-about (or, perhaps a sense of justice) must be seen as instrumental in establishing the conditions under which caring-for can flourish. . . . Those who care about others in the justice sense must keep in mind that the objective is to ensure that the objective is to ensure that caring actually occurs. Caring about is empty if it does not culminate in caring relations" (pp. 22-24).

who has direct and unmediated motivation and skills to enhance the value of another person.

I worry here that Noddings' single, sometimes overly neat understanding of ethical caring as "a state of being in relation, characterized by receptivity, relatedness, and engrossment"[77] shadows a similar fate of universalist ethics. Debra Shogun[78] argues that the notions of receptivity and relatedness trumps caring as a lived process of sympathy and active solidarity with another. Noddings holds that for a caring relationship to be present, care must not only be given, but also received or at least acknowledged by the person cared for. Doesn't this give short shrift to strangers, particularly those who don't reciprocate? From an ethical perspective, if I care for someone who does not reciprocate, am I involved in an uncaring relationship? Noddings thinks so, at least in her early writing. Later there is considerable ambivalence, so that in a response to a critique by Michael Slote involving this very question, she offers an explanation for her ambivalence, saying that she is no longer certain that caring is primary, let alone "a universal human attribute,"[79] though being cared for may be, particularly in Western societies with their emphasis on independence. Nonetheless, because Noddings wants to "bring us face-to-face with the moral life," she continues to insist that "how good I can be depends at least in part on how you treat me."[80]

The case for caring, however, may not be restricted to either a virtue of care or a caring relationship. What would happen if notions and practices of care were seen beyond the binary notions of us and them, or, in this case, carer and cared for? As I will discuss later, what if host and guest are much more intertwined? What if there is mutuality and interdependence already present in the relationship? In a hospitable world I may, for instance, discover that as I change the diaper of my grandson, I am the one being cared

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[77] Nel Noddings, *Educating Moral People* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002), p. 2.

[78] See Debra Shogon, *Care and Moral Motivation* (Toronto: OISE Press, 1997), p. 57.

[79] Nel Noddings (Columbia University, 1999), "Two Concepts of Caring," *Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (Columbia University, 1999.) Retrieved April 2006 from http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-yearbook/1999/noddings-body.asp. In this article Noddings distinguishes between caring as virtue and caring as "a special attribute of relations." For Michael Slote's assessment of Noddings, see Michael Slote, "Caring versus the Philosophers," at http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-yearbook/1999/slote.asp (from *PES Yearbook*, 1999).

[80] Ibid.

for. Locating moral virtue in some attitude or value rather than in the relationship risks underestimating both persons and the treasure of the relationship already present. Caring is surely also about revisualizing our own place in relation and seeking alternatives to the technical and rational pathways that produce fear (and binaries).

Drawing on educational literature from the German human-science school (*Geisteswissenshaftliche*), Max Van Manen presents a phenomenological proposal of the relation between pedagogical reflection and action in teaching. The term for this relation is *pedagogical tact.*[81] Although the focus of van Manen's research is the epistemology of professional practice, deep connections to relationality arise out of "the practical moral intuitiveness" that is required of teachers. Van Manen describes the essence of teaching (and of parenting) as *hope.* It is the hope that growth will occur, that change will result, that things can become something other than they already are. "What hope gives us is the simple avowal: 'I will not give up on you. I know that you can make a life for yourself.'" Thus hope refers to that which gives us patience and tolerance, belief and trust in the possibility of our children.[82] Pedagogical authority is a "moral service" on behalf of children who in a sense call adults to serve them.[83] Pedagogy "is the art of tactfully mediating the possible influences of the world so that the child is constantly encouraged to assume more self-responsibility for learning and growth."[84] It is also "a certain encounter of togetherness between parent and child, teacher and pupil, . . . a relationship of practical action between an adult and young person who is on the way to adulthood."[85]

Within hospitable relations it is easy to agree that pedagogy and pedagogical relations must be found in the lived world and not in the abstract world of technological or analytic systems. However, the notion that pedagogy supports a relentlessly progressive move towards increasing self-reliance and independence is quite troubling. When I open the door to an Other, at this moment we "already are." If instead of the Other's presence I nurture some kind of prior knowledge that is out "there" someday when you "make a life for yourself," a hope that you will become something other than

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[81] Max van Manen, *The Tact of Teaching* (London, Ontario: The Althouse Press, 1991).
[82] van Manen (1991), p. 68.
[83] Ibid., p. 69.
[84] Ibid., p. 80.
[85] Ibid., pp. 30-31.

who you already are, is this not a refusal of who shows up, however, whenever, wherever? It seems violent in its failure to take into account that life itself is not about increased capacity (growth, progress), especially toward some static end state called adulthood. Life is what it is, and sometimes notions of progress can even interfere with the kinds of growth that make life more human, even if unbridled growth were possible. A brief story will illustrate.

One Sunday evening a number of years ago, I received a call from the General Hospital. It was a nurse, informing my wife and me that a patient, Greg (a pseudonym), was being discharged and had identified me as a friend from high school. "Would he," she inquired, "be able to stay with you for a couple of weeks while continuing his rehabilitation from a serious car accident?" When I went to the hospital to pick him up, Greg was sitting in a wheelchair at a nursing station. "Are you Ron?" he queried, hearing my voice, but blind from the accident. We shook hands, and he managed an unrecognizable smile due to two broken cheekbones. Over the next few minutes, between the nurse and Greg, I had a full description of the extent of his injuries (including the removal of part of his brain and an eye, partial loss of hearing, loss of smell and taste). He also had new knees and a pin in a hip, which, the nurse reassured us, "he is learning to make good use of." Greg remarked that we could feed him anything because he couldn't taste, see, or smell, "But don't make it too revolting because I'm learning the texture of foods."

Now Greg was *not* among my friends in high school, at least not as far as I was concerned. He did not have many friends at all. He was very good at science, but his social prowess was a little like the clothes he wore—too small and out of season. And, like his hair, he always seemed awkward and out of place. But he'd tag along with several of us, and quite regularly he'd pull up a chair in the lunch room beside me, where he would tell me about the latest episodes in his family in which alcohol abuse had turned home into a violent place. I had little idea of what his experience of those encounters was at the time, nor of a couple of brief encounters after high school. However, as I wheeled him out of the hospital and helped him to settle into our guest room, it became clear that, regardless of what I thought of our relationship, after 23 years of no contact, he still

regarded me as at least the most likely friend to help in his dire circumstances. Or was it that he remembered something that I didn't?

Over the two-and-a-half months that he stayed with us, life settled into daily routines. After several weeks he was able to make his way via the C-train to the hospital and home for daily therapy, and I no longer had to drop him off or pick him up on my way to and from my own work. He was even able to reach the point of doing his own personal care, including boiling the artificial eye and cleaning a plate of teeth, before retiring each evening. I will never forget our evening teatimes of quiet conversation about how things were going, the things he was relearning, the sense of renewal after his physical shattering, and the deep, sometimes desperate loneliness of his life, a loneliness made all the more stark by the loss of most of his senses, confined to a world where the only hope of "knowing" anything was through the verification principle, "What hope is there for me with no senses?" Arriving home one evening, I found him on a chair, hugging a planted flowerpot to his chest, with tears streaming down his face. When I asked him what was happening, he confided, "I'm beginning to smell again."

Providing Greg with at least a measure of hospitable space and relations helped me to realize that the learning, relearning, and healing were arriving through interdependence, not independence. This is quite different from "the hope of education" that van Manen describes (and others espouse) in growing independence and increasing "self-responsibility for learning and growth." As healing visited Greg's life, it arrived through communal interdependence. Yes, there continues to be hope. But it is a hope born of insufficiency, lack, profound loss, going backwards as much as forward, and hospitality, which is living in the Presence of life that shows up, whenever, wherever, and however it does. I wonder, how does Greg's ever-present dependency fit van Manen's hope of education? Does it mean that Greg, or other's like him, are outside the scope of education? The question, I think, has a magnified significance in light of the incessant creep to equate human life with functionality signaled by the neoliberal agenda of contemporary 'global' (Western) economics. Perhaps it becomes crucial in these times more than ever, providing a place and a time for loss, for inability and disability; for nonfunctionality, in a word; for facing the Other within the reality that life already counts

and does not depend on growth, achievement, or progress. Given Greg's story of unfolding interdependence, the hope of independence (a profoundly Western myth) may not be desirable, even if were possible. Perhaps embracing loss and death permits the most amazing gifts to emerge, such as learning to smell, as if for the first time, at 40.

Perhaps the exclusionary tendencies here are not intended. Nevertheless, within the temporality of hospitality, to focus exclusively on growth and ongoing progress (such as found in "Progress Report") limits us to a future that never arrives. This is profoundly inhospitable and exclusionary. Within a hospitable temporality, the present holds hope simply because it is already. When life dispenses times of dependency and loss and loneliness beyond words, I embrace these for what they are and care for them without trying to cure them, in full apprehension that these too are gifts.

Communitarian Options

Communitarian options suggest that universalist notions lead to oppression, violence, and exploitation rather than peace and prosperity. We should therefore celebrate communal distinctives and promote heterogeneity, placing ourselves on the side of the localized interests of indigenous cultures. Taylor explains what is also called the "politics of difference": "What we are asked to recognize is the unique identity of this individual or group, their distinctiveness from everyone else. The idea is that it is precisely this distinctness that has been ignored, glossed over, assimilated to a dominant or majority identity. And this assimilation is the cardinal sin against the ideal of authenticity."[86] Some of the studies of the race-class-gender genre are a part of the communitarian efforts to raise the awareness of minority groups whose rights, for instance, may not be part of what the world defines as universals. Carol Lee Flinders analyzed how we live out our gender—men out of the values of Enterprise, women out of the values of Belonging—and of how Enterprise has subsumed Belonging ever since the Agricultural Revolution. She challenges the notion, though, that these must necessarily be competitive values, that difference itself "must not be seen as synonymous with division, nor can it be allowed to

[86] Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in Amy Gutmann, Ed., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 38.

be a rationale for dominance.[87] Evy Varsamopoulou (2002) sees a similar dance of mutuality in the very language of hospitality. She argues that the language of host and guest is a language premised on static constructions of ownership inscribed in modernity. However, in the context of eternal obligation, a notion that she draws from Simone Weil, we own nothing. In this sense, we are all equally strangers and guests. In return for being made to feel at home (hosted) in a world we neither originated nor control or own, we mutually seek to make a place for each other in language; that is, in *response to* each other and in extending shared goods: in being *responsible for* each other. Hospitality by its nature implies mutuality.[88]

Enrique Dussel also seeks a way between diverse cultures and civilizations, but he seeks to find it in the Western loss of sightlines to the Other. In this I am not sure that he would call his ethics communitarian. In his theology of liberation he has found an explanation for the totalitarian thought of oppression through recourse to what it has excluded: the perspective, and the labor, of its victims. What emerges is a revision of universality by combining it with a recognition of irreducible difference, a "diversality."[89] Dussel's argument proceeds from the notion that inscribed within the myth of modernity is the myth of sacrifice. That is, Western cultural meaning is constructed in such a way that the Other becomes disposable. Dussel, an Argentinean, suggests that modernism in its present form has no eyes to see Other. When the goal is individual freedom, prosperity, and progress, then everything is justifiable, including the disposability of the Other. Dussel suggests that at the root of this is the rationalistic construct, in which knowledge is an object to be sought in order to be possessed and controlled. In such an understanding the world is constructed in binaries such as *rich vs. poor*, *male vs. female*, and *us vs. them.* Development and progress have occurred only because of the emancipatory silences to the question, What happens to the other if I am

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[87] Carol Lee Flinders, *The Values of Belonging* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishing, 2002), p. 192.

[88] Evy Varsamopoulou, *Hospitality Needs Equality: An Investigation into Conditions Underlying Hospitality* Leeds, UK: University of Leeds, 2002). Paper presented to the first Congress of the Centre of Cultural Analysis, Theory, and History, June 2002. Retrieved from Conference Web site, July 13, 2002, http://www.leeds.ad.uk/cath/congress/2002/programme/paper/34.html

[89] Linda Martin Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta, Eds., *Thinking from the Underside of History: Enrique Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002), p. 3.

free? He documents this in the treatment of the Amerindians when he traces the myth of sacrifice, not to theories of hegemony, but to a relational logic that eclipses or erases Other in the interests of control and progress. Dussel's work is deeply hermeneutical, as he calls for an approach to the future that draws into question this social consciousness rather than perpetuating it. Instead of a postmodernity, which also holds potential for the negation of the other, he calls for a transmodernity with the project of bonding woman to man, class to class, center to periphery, race to race, humanity to earth, and occidental to Third World. He holds the possibility of the way forward in processes of mutuality and in *ways* of seeing and knowing that satisfy the rich diversities of living together.

A rather good example of a theological ethicist who comes at his work from a largely communitarian standpoint is Miroslav Volf. Volf is a Croatian who writes in part out of his own exile and suffering in the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s. He proposes the liberating, practical virtue of *embrace* as a response to the exclusionary ideologies that underwrite strangeness and otherness and sometimes demonize them in the West. He is trying to find a way between two betrayals, "the betrayal of the suffering, exploited, and excluded, and the betrayal of the very core of my faith."[90] The way between these betrayals is mirrored in his wrestle between the universalizing and moralizing tendencies of modernism and the splintering effects of stylistic surfaces in postmodernism. The path he finds is one of high risk and danger, of opening ourselves to the Other, in their arrival, to allow the possibility for embrace to arise. Such embrace includes but is not exclusive to personal healing. "It may not be too much to claim that the future of our world will depend on how we deal with identity and difference."[91]

Ivan Illich is particularly concerned about the demise of hospitality in the West and in the possibilities of *re*constructing it. Illich was born in 1926 in Vienna, Austria, and began his life as a priest/pastor to a Puerto-Rican community in the 1960s. After conflict with the Vatican, he withdrew from the priesthood in 1969 and spent the rest of his life problematizing the certitudes of contemporary Western society and a number of its theological underpinnings. His deep concern is that life is made inhospitable by an

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[90] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), p. 9.
[91] Ibid., p. 20.

economics of life in which what is experienced as life is experienced under the regime of scarcity. His thought though, in my view, transcends radical social criticism in its movement to the healing roots of life that he finds in primal faith and friendship. What makes his voice clear in the testimony of those who knew him is his authenticity, particularly in a profound indifference to contemporary values: long life, fame, and riches. Possessing no home, he relied on the hospitality of his friends. He traveled with two bags, and refused any form of medical insurance and treatment, and at the end of every year he gave away his savings from teaching or writing.

A central feature of Illich's thought was that it was the corruption of Christianity *(corruptio optimi que est pessima*—the corruption of the best is the worst) that sowed the seeds of destruction of the gift economy of the commons. He says, "In the age of the Church [early and medieval], the idea of the neighbor who constantly lives encountering Christ in the unknown who knocks at his door and asks for hospitality, the idea of acting out of a love [agape] which is a gift gets corrupted by being defined as something which can be institutionalized, which charitable institutions can do much better than a bunch of individual Christians."[92] This is part of Illich's lifelong description of the phenomenon of counterproductivity in Western culture. What he meant was that in the West's pursuit of efficient technical institutional processes, the processes themselves eclipsed and then undermined the original need, and cures were provided without care. He applied this first to public education, originated by the Church, arguing that it had become an impediment to real education.[93] In the same way, advanced technological tools such as telephones, cars, and television were at odds with autonomous human development and the culture of friendship, for which they once were invented and claim to promote. High-tech health care was making people sick (*Medical Nemesis*, 1975). Modern, techno-bureaucratic efforts to better the human condition, grounded in corruptions of the Christian faith that focused on control, undermined their own ends. Instead of adding to friendship and self-reliance, institutions tended to weaken self-reliance through a process of cultivating needs

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[92] Ivan Illich, "The Corruption of Christianity: Ivan Illich on Gospel, Church and Society." Transcription of *Ideas.* Paul Kennedy, host; David Cayley, interviewer (Toronto: CBC, January, 2000). p. 1.

[93] Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society.* Original publication 1971. Text made available online by Pal Knatz and PK Imaging. Retrieved May 6, 2006, from http://reactor-core.org/deschooling.html

that can be met only by professionalized services. For instance, Illich laments that the institutional drive to monetarize the global economy has made life intolerable for those who live in subsistence, because the means of subsistence—reliance on each other—is destroyed when money is required for everything.[94] In this, the common wisdom, common solutions, which had borne a society for generations, ceased. In the end, these institutions produce further estrangements from life, threatening people's ability both to enjoy and to bear the human condition. For example, in explaining why he voluntarily suffered, refusing technological medical treatment for his facial tumor, he says simply, "*Nudum Christum nadum sequere*": "I follow the naked Christ." He explains: "Yes, we suffer pain, we become ill, we die. But we also hope, laugh, celebrate; we know the joy of caring for one another, often we are healed and we recover by many means. We do not have to pursue the flattening out of human experience. I invite all to shift their gaze, their thoughts, from worrying about health care to cultivating the art of living. And today, with equal importance, the art of suffering, the art of dying."[95]

Late in life Illich focused almost entirely on the impact of the ethos of non-satiety created by the destructive power of modern institutions that "create needs faster than they can create satisfaction, and in the process of trying to meet the needs they generate, they consume the earth."[96] Again, here he was considerably more interested in *re*construction, especially notions of friendship, and what he saw as the rupture of academic study from the experience of community.[97]

Illich's notion of hospitality involve boundaries and a threshold across which Other might be invited. These boundaries, he contends, have been blurred by the flattening of personhood by the screen, but they have also been impacted by the increasing difficulty of facing each other due to the spin, manipulation, and control of the

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[94] See an interview with Ivan Illich in "Whole Earth News," Winter 1988. Available at http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1510/is_n61/ai_6896816 (retrieved July 11, 2004). An example of this is that people in South African townships used to haul their water from a common well. Today they are being evicted from their homes and land because they don't have money to pay for privatized water distribution.

[95] Ivan Illich. A quotation by Jerry Brown in his tribute, "The Art of Suffering." Retrieved May 2004 from http://www.wholeearthmag.com/articlebin/III-7.html

[96] Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary on Hugh's Didascalicon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 32.

[97] Illich, 2000, p. 45.

gaze.[98] When persons are filtered through the flat screen, they remain hidden from view, relationally speaking. "How can I say," Illich asks, "I am somebody who wants to respect you, who wants to look up to you," in a world where proportionality has been lost? Despite these difficulties, there is a social reality that is beautiful in itself, that cannot be achieved in politics or public life, that I can cultivate "when we get together around spaghetti and a glass of wine."[99] Illich underscores the possibilities for both "generating seedbeds for virtue and friendship on the one hand and on the other radiating out for possible community, for rebirth of community" when he says, "I do think that if I had to choose one word to which hope can be tied it is hospitality, a practice of hospitality recovering threshold, table, listening, patience."[100]

How is the Stranger to be embraced as they show up? Young suggests that it is "critical reflection"[101] upon the experience of the stranger that will move a non-poor person to new ethical constructs or behavior. I understand, however, that at least part of the development of an ethic that engages the Stranger will happen beyond the debates that surround universals and difference and beyond categories such as race, class, and gender. A helpful way toward an ethic of hospitality, as well as a challenge to the communitarian approach, unfolds in Gertrude Conway's work. The current response to difference is tolerance, she argues, and this has a leveling effect that can lead to indifference rather than the robust engagement of the Other in hospitable relations. Drawing on the work of Gadamer, she develops very hopeful insights and questions regarding hospitality and pedagogy that will be explored in Chapter 6.[102]

Postmodern Options

Postmodern proposals for living in the Presence of life that shows up come not so much as solutions as questions that seek to open the very possibility of hospitality. One of

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[98] Intimacy, for instance, can easily become dislocated by the simple technical maneuver of "pushing in," zooming the camera closer to the face (Conversation with a student in film studies).

[99] An interview with Jerry Brown in 1996. Retrieved July 11, 2002, from http://homepage.mac.com/tinapple/illich_1996_and_brown.html

[100] Illich, 2000, p. 6.

[101] M. Young (1999), *Towards a Transformative Model for Ethics Education in the First World.* Retrieved July 11, 2002, from http://www.schoolnet.ca/sne/e/installsites.html

[102] Gertrude Conway, "Strangers in Our Midst." *Analytic Teaching, 23*(1), 2002, pp. 44f.

the first people to begin to define and try to understand postmodernism was Jean-Francois Lyotard. In his seminal work, *The Postmodern Condition*,[103] he set out to survey the status of scientific and technological knowledge, and it ended up as something of a treatise on epistemology. Lyotard became interested in the question of how science legitimizes itself, makes itself believable, including writing its own history. In accounting for the beginnings of postmodernism, Lyotard looked at the Holocaust. He described Auschwitz as "a crime opening postmodernity" because it fully expressed modernity's goal of the realization of universality and morally destroyed modernity's goal by liquidating it.[104] Lyotard defined postmodern as "incredulity toward metanarratives."[105] His term *metanarratives* can be roughly explained as universal guiding principles, systems of thought, grand stories that control, contain, and interpret reality. They claim to be able to account for and explain all other, lesser stories. It is easy to recognize these metanarratives. They are defended by force and perpetuate violence and are instruments of power. They ignore, obscure, or obliterate local narratives and other versions of the truth. Postmodernity's incredulity functions to undermine and critique the 'grand story'/theory of reality that props up false power structures. In other words, by asking particular questions, the postmodern opens up Other stories beyond the universal ones. Postmodernity undermines metanarratives by exploring and listening to local narratives, other voices that have been marginalized. "The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements. . . . Where after metanarratives can legitimacy reside?[106]

Is there one history? One narrative? I remember studying history in school, particularly about the brave pioneers from Scotland via Nova Scotia who surveyed and

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[103] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report On Knowledge*, Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Trans. (London: Methuen, 1984).

[104] This is not unique to Lyotard. Emmanuel Levinas, Hannah Arendt, and Zygmunt Bauman have similar views that tie the Holocaust's evil to the evil of rationality.

[105] Lyotard (1984), p. xxiv.

[106] Ibid., p. xxv. Lyotard goes on to say that all metanarratives have lost their credibility, regardless of the mode of unification that they use, whether it is positivistic science as the key to human progress, the hermeneutics of meaning as a key to human self-formation, or the emancipation of human beings through class struggle. There is no grand story to be told (p. 37).

settled the empty Canadian west in the mid to late 19th century. I never wondered about the stories of expulsion that brought them to Nova Scotia in the first place. Nor did I wonder about why there were a few, but so few, Métis classmates in school. Nor did I wonder about all the other stories of exclusion that brought other classmates to our school from the Ukraine, from Czechoslovakia, and so forth. Years later, wandering through a museum at Duck Lake, Saskatchewan, I read that surveyors of Scotch descent came to Northern Saskatchewan to "survey the land, that had previously been surveyed by the French and Métis settlers" and that this touched off what became known as the Riel Rebellion. The land, it turned out, had not been "empty" at all. And the only thing that made my ancestors brave was moving ancient boundary markers and survey pins. Which history is true? All of them? None? On the face of things, my story often shows up as a story of "great heroes," "great voyages" and "great dangers," supported by a metanarrative of colonial logic in which "the Rebellion was put down" and Riel hanged. But what may be going on is that, as Nietzsche puts it, the will to truth is often a distortion of the will to power. In other words, history is written by the powerful to authenticate their power. Lyotard's interest in metanarrative is not in the clash between them that can be used as explanation for exclusion and other violence. Rather, it is in the use of the language, the phrasings, in a multiplicity of language games, by which he means this: If you want to know the meaning of a term, a phrase, or a sentence, look at how it is used, how it functions in human interaction. It is this insistence on the legitimacy of "small" narratives, of the multiplicity and heterogeneity of language games, that leads Lyotard to a mosaic fracturing or splintering of knowledges. There are no longer universal rules valid for all statements, especially after Auschwitz.

Postmodern proposals about hospitality therefore have much to offer simply in the questions that are invited to stories: Who's telling the story? How does the story prop up their power? How do they know? Who did they ask? Who's not talking? Which stories are not being told? What do they want me to buy or do? (That is, how am I being controlled or manipulated in this story?) These questions that arise out of hermeneutics of suspicion are not so much bred of cynicism as of the possibility of living authentically in the Presence of whoever shows up. It might be asked, "If there is no metanarrative,

particularly around objectivity, aren't we just left floating around in a sea of subjectivism?" Richard Rohr responds that postmodernism removed the idea that the opposite of subjectivism is objectivity and replaces it with "the other."[107] In other words, the human way of dealing with subjectivism is not in objectifying it (the modernist approach), but in dialoguing with Others and in listening to those unlike ourselves. Another important question emerges around the postmodern rejection of modern metanarrative, around representation and identity (Who speaks for whom?). I will explore this later.

A deconstructionist philosopher, Derrida (1930-2004) also finds problems with modernist social constructs. At the root of the problem of hospitality is an epistemological problem: *"We do not know what hospitality is."*[108] Derrida's deconstruction of Kant's *Third Definitive Article of a Perpetual Peace* surrounds this 'unknowing': that hospitality "gives itself to thought beyond knowledge"; that in hospitality we never know when the guest comes; that cosmopolitan right has not produced 'perpetual peace'; and that there is always a temporal 'not yet' or 'to come' aspect to hospitality that cannot be defined without destroying it. Furthermore, the other whom one is receiving may come as an enemy as well as a stranger in need. In keeping with his deconstructionist theme that "there is nothing outside the text," Derrida's argument is that in the very definition of hospitality as a universal, the possibilities implicit in it are destroyed.

Derrida also raises the issue of the problem of identity, or, more particularly, the problem of stable identities that represent Other. One reading of postmodernism suggests that the sanctuary from modernity's universal reason and values that underpin oppressive particular identities is in the radical autonomy of individuals. The caricature of the wayward and erratic vagabond, ambivalent and fragmented, always on the move and never doing much more than making moves, it is said, contributes to a new tribalism in which cultures are divided into subcultures, markets to segments, and language to micro-

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[107] Richard Rohr, *Everything Belongs* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), p. 68.

108 Jacques Derrida (2000), "Hospitality." *Angelaki, 5*(3). Barry Stocker and Forbes Morlock, Trans. (pp. 3, 7).

language.[109] The indeterminacy of identity is illustrated in Jacques Derrida's reflection on his own European identity:

> I am European, I am no doubt a European intellectual, and I like to recall this, I like to recall this to myself, and why would I deny it? In the name of what? But I am not , nor do I feel, European in every part, that is, European through and through. Being a part, belonging as "fully a part," should be incompatible with belonging "in every part." My cultural identity, that in the name of which I speak, is not only European, it is not identical to itself, and am not "cultural" through and through, "cultural" in every part.[110]

Although Derrida has brought to focus the paternalistic and colonizing effects of Kantian epistemology, his reluctance to make explicit the grounds for sociality of any kind has created considerable debate that centers around the ground for ethical or political action. For, although it is true that essentialist notions of hospitality such as those found in Kant or Rawls have not produced a more humane world, should we expect that *no* notion of hospitality, or an inexplicit solipsistic one, will produce one? In deconstructing, the Western roots of hospitality as an unknown, some argue, have left us without ground for the social consciousness necessary for political action of any sort.[111] Paulo Freire had the courage to denounce in order to announce. Does Derrida engage only in the former?

Another postmodern writer who attempts to recover "resistance" within postmodern religious and ethical thought and practice is Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995). Levinas is a very significant figure in the "theological turn" of French phenomenology that started in the mid 1970s and continues.[112] According to Dominique Janicaud,[113] this

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[109] See, for instance, Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Postmodern Times* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1996), pp. 143 ff.

[110] Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe.* P.-A. Brault and M. B. Naas, Trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 82f.

[111] Kit Barton (2002), *Derrida Guarantees the Unconditional: The Desire to Maintain the Self/Other Distinction and the Limit It Poses for Politics* (Leeds, UK: University of Leeds, 2002). Paper presented to the first Congress of the Centre of Cultural Analysis, Theory, and History, June 2002. Paper received at conference and retrieved from Conference Web site, July 13, 2002: http://www.leeds.ad.uk/cath/congress/2002/programme/paper/34.shtml

[112] Derrida, in an address at a combined gathering of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature, Toronto, ON, November 2002, gave considerable credit to Levinas for his own interest in transcendence.

[113] Dominique Janicaud, "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology," in *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), p. 17. As

turn had to do with concern for the transcendent, or, as he puts it, "the opening to the invisible, to the Other, to pure giveness, or to archi-revelation." Levinas makes the theological turn possible by turning phenomenology's gaze toward "otherness," that which is strange to us, including the ultimate Other. Levinas sees, along with Jean-Luc Marion, and Nietzsche before him, claims to have grasped the Other, or the world as it "really" is, to be idolatrous. So Levinas's questioning of the possible immanence (closeness) of phenomena to achieve a sense of mastery of experience arises out of irreverence for their mystery, their otherness. Levinas pushes the problem of the systematization of experiences beyond the epistemological and metaphysical issues that Nietzsche saw to be morally questionable. To the extent to which systematization is an attempt to control to be able to possess, such theologizing is not innocent. Rather, it is an attempt to create one's own law; that is, personal "autonomy"—in Greek *auto* ("self") plus *nomos* ("law"). Celebrated by Kant, this is particularly troublesome to Levinas in that my freedom always comes at the expense of other's freedom. Thus theologizing/ philosophizing in its Enlightenment tradition is characterized by privileging the self, both in reason and action, *over the Other* to "proclaim the philosophical birthright of autonomy."[114]

Levinas, like Illich, makes much of *the face of the Other.* He describes the face as "the bearer of an order, imposing upon me."[115] I will discuss this in more detail later. Suffice it to say here that the imposition of the Other is found in the actual practice of hospitality, of welcome, of the other as they arrive unannounced. Levinas proposes that a moral stance involves a permanent struggle on behalf of the Other. In keeping with this, he seeks to avoid "symmetricity."[116] He writes, "The knot of subjectivity consists in going to the other without concerning oneself with his movement toward me. Or, more exactly, it consists in approaching in such a way that, over and beyond all the reciprocal

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cited in Bruce Ellis Benson, *Graven Ideologies: Nietzsche, Derrida and Marion on Modern Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2002), pp. 10f.

[114] Emmanuel Levinas, "Philosophy and the Idea of the Infinite," in *Collected Philosophical Papers: Phenomenologia 100* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer, 1987), p. 93.

[115] Emannuel Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence,* Michael B. Smith, Trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 170.

[116] The notion that a moral stance or moral practice requires response; for example, Nel Noddings' idea that "How good I can be depends in part on how you treat me." See discussion above.

relations that do not fail to get set up between me and the neighbor I have always taken one step more toward him."[117] Hospitality here involves "one step more" toward the Other. Hospitality implies that the self and the other belong together in their mutual alterity, drawn together by the Otherness of Other. Levinas's description of hospitable relations raises important questions about the obligations of a guest. It is enough to say that Levinas provides a valuable postmodern framework for shaping hospitable responses, even responsibility, in the contemporary world, to which I will return.

Beyond "Social Arrangement"

These three solutions to the exclusions and estrangements of the world appear predominantly to share a common concentration on social arrangement. They answer how group life (or society, or the world) ought to be arranged to make space for living together, for creating a threshold or a door to open to the Other. One, or a group, should guard universal values or promote a plurality of particular communal identities or offer a space for Other by challenging the epistemic foundations of social arrangement itself.

These arrangements provide important perspectives about persons and their relationships, and they are deeply situated culturally and are themselves the sites of frequent wars for the right to define and enforce the meaning of shared space. The focus on social arrangement itself, for instance, seems to suffer from the modernist tendency to stop questioning itself about whether the focus on social arrangement is the appropriate question regarding estrangement in the first place. Zygmunt Bauman argues that modernity has a tendency "to shift moral responsibilities away from the moral self either toward socially constructed and managed supra-individual agencies, or through floating responsibility inside a bureaucratic 'rule of nobody.'"[118] In the same way, postmodernity creates a climate in which evading ethical responsibilities could become a way of life. By rendering relationships "fragmentary" and "discontinuous," it fosters " disengagement

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[117] Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*, A. Lingis, Trans. (The Hague: Matinus Nijhoff, 1981), p. 84.

[118] Zygmunt Bauman, *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality* (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1995), p. 99. See also *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), in which Bauman describes the same loss of agency and control of space, pace, and mobility because we can only watch as boundaries, institutions, and loyalties shift for the benefit of global capital.

and commitment-avoidance."[119] The extent to which Bauman is right is the extent to which reflection on social arrangement is required. However, social arrangement theory is dangerous to relational health! In many respects it is a minefield of competing interests where relationships collapse into discourses around power, justice and rights, and other ways of dividing up the world and eclipsing the ever-present face of Other. Instead of the possibility of facing the Other communally, what remains is the construction of private worlds of abstraction, which, in a sense, demand critical ways of thinking and talking. What if openness to the Stranger was itself resistance to power grabs? Would peace have a chance if, instead of dividing up the world into good and bad, we held them together in our own soul, where they are anyway?

The main concern then of my inquiry is not social arrangement, but social agency. Although I will draw from the well of social arrangement theory, it will be with, I hope, a guarded suspicion of many of its modernist inscriptions. Instead of reflecting on the kind of society we ought to create to accommodate individual or group difference, I want to explore the kind people we need to be to live in harmony with others, especially strangers. By social agency I do not mean primarily the will to act, such as inhabits questions like "How shall we live in the face of the stranger?" or "How shall we live in the face of estrangement?" The will to action has its own modernist inscriptions. I am more interested though in the will to see, or re-cognize the Other such as may be found in these questions: "Where shall we allow ourselves to be drawn by compassion, or perhaps the soul of compassion, in the presence of a stranger, an enemy, a refugee, or a hungry person?" "How does this virtue arise, how is it learned?" "What will be the contribution of our pedagogy in encouraging our becoming loving and responsive persons?" I have an interest in the shift towards practical virtue, particularly hospitality, as everyday expression of who we are, that is getting underway. I turn then to the history of Western hospitality and how it has come to be corrupted.

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[119] Ibid., p 156.

CHAPTER 3:

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WESTERN HOSPITALITY

History is important for this project. It is after all, as Illich observes, "only in the mirror of the past" that it becomes possible "to recognize the radical otherness of modern assumptions."[120] Although welcoming the Stranger has had a long history in the West, this history has been checkered due to the intertwining of forces and factors inside and outside the dominant Christian teachings and practices. To fully engage the story, there is a need to reflect upon the tradition of hospitality as practiced in Hebrew, Graeco-Roman, and early Christian life, as well as how it became corrupted in later processes of institutionalization.

Hebrew Hospitality

Western hospitality began with strangers. At the start Abraham obeyed a divine call to leave the security of home to become a pilgrim, a sojourner, a stranger heading to a land of promise that he did not possess. Through a series of circumstances, which the faithful later interpreted as the providence of Yahweh, the descendants of Abraham—initially a family/tribe of 70—became a collection of slaves, strangers in imperial Egypt, living and prospering there, but without home and without identity. The center of their story, the exodus, began when these people asked permission to go into the desert to worship; that is, to cross Egypt's border, to refuse Egypt's gods. Old Testament theologian Walter Brueggemann says that the word *hebrew* originally meant "one who crosses over"; that is, one who lives outside imperial boundaries. In their very naming, this tribe of slaves embodied an alternative of freedom to the static, triumphalistic, and oppressive regime in which they found themselves.[121]

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[120] Illich (2000), p. 30.
[121] Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 16.

Fearful of the threat of the slaves, who were prolific in their population growth, the Pharaohs enacted social and economic policies to control this threat to their imperial power. The economic policy attacked their health and the social policy attacked their homes. The economic policy attacked their health by submitting them to hard labor in empire-building projects, increasing their daily production quotas for bricks, and decreasing their means of production in the process by having them make bricks without straw.[122] The Pharaoh's social policies were designed to attack their homes by making them practice male infanticide. In a profound act of civil disobedience, the Hebrew midwives, who feared Yahweh more than the imperial agenda, let the boys, including one Moses, live.

Through another set of events that bear considerable testimony to the female in making space, Moses was raised by his own Hebrew mother in Pharaoh's court, a guest of Egyptian hospitality. From the outset of the Western story we find strangers, outsiders, without a home and without identity. In fact, it became a story of salvation that is also important to the Western tradition of hospitality, including its corruption, precisely because Yahweh himself served as the 'nameless host' who provided a place and an identity for strangers.

For millennia the story, sacred to the Hebrews and later Christians, has contained numerous texts and subtexts that explain the hospitality of Yahweh. Interestingly, all of the explanations are in terms of who Yahweh is, the Strange/Holy One beyond imperial cooption. Yahweh is "God of gods and Lord of lords the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt."[123] The Hebrew identity was largely shaped by their being strangers and their halting worship of the Strange One. Their chosen-yet-alien status and experience with Yahweh became the experiential basis from which they could know the feelings and needs of strangers and

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[122] This is reminiscent of the 'slavery' of the Industrial Revolution when coal miners bought their goods from the 'company store.' It is captured in the song "Sixteen tons and what do you get? Another day older and one more debt! St. Peter don't call me 'cause I can't go! I owe my soul to the company store."

[123] Deuteronomy 10: 17-19. All notations taken from Hebrew /Christian scriptures are from the New International Translation (1973), International Bible Society.

powerless people living in their midst. This experience of estrangement was continually reinforced by texts, most explicitly in Exodus 23:9: "You shall not oppress a stranger; you know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."[124] Christine Pohl says that this interest was nurtured "by an emphasis on its own experience as an alien and by reflection on God's gracious character."[125]

The Hebrew people were, after Yahweh, to be both stranger and host. The metaphor of Yahweh as a stranger/sojourner *with* the people is picked up in the social laws that were to define their community: "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are aliens and my tenants."[126] Yahweh's identity as host is picked up in Psalm 23, where He prepared a banquet even as enemies surrounded the house. After the growth of their own monarchy, complete with imperial interests and a bureaucracy that included rulers and priests supporting their own self-interests, the prophets bore witness against the Yahwists. They were particularly vocal about the loss of *shalom*, signaled by the greedy and unjust appropriation of land that manufactured scarcity, eclipsing the nature of the land as gift, with enough for all. This opened the way for injustice and mistreatment of foreigners as well. The most famous story is the theft of Naboth's vineyard.[127]

It is very clear that the Hebrew tradition of hospitality that flows later into Christian practice and view of the stranger is not limited to friends and family or people towards whom there are natural likings or proclivities. Rather, hospitality is a way of being in the world with others whom one does not know. Israel's neighbors also practiced this kind of hospitality. Such hospitality was recognized throughout the ancient world as a sacred duty. In a story that Derrida and Levinas highlight, Abraham, the patriarch of both Hebrew and Christian faith, ran from his tent into the scorching sun to greet three strangers; he was simply fulfilling his duty to them to include them in his family (Genesis 19). He bowed to them as a household servant, offering water to wash their feet and the best of his fare: meat, milk, and bread. What appears to have been distinctive about

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[124] See also Deuteronomy 26: 1-15; 24:14-22; and 27:19; Psalms 94:5-7; 146:9.
[125] Pohl, 29.
[126] Leviticus 25:23.
[127] Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977). This is an extensive discussion on Israel's relation to land.

Israelite society was the explicit legislation to protect and provide for the resident alien. The commands to "love your neighbor as yourself," and "to love the alien as yourself"[128] reached to landless residents of the land, whose marginality made them powerless, vulnerable, and subject to exploitation.[129] The Hebrew tradition of hospitality has to do with serving strangers, whether incidental ones or resident aliens, in such a way that their status changes from stranger to guest, from that of sojourner to being at home with hosts. Being a guest and a host in these arrangements necessitated both the crossing of boundaries as well as respect for them. Of course, by the time of the Herods, the growing desire for religious and racial purity had largely eclipsed notions of hospitality, particularly among those of the party of the Pharisees who had become politically and socially ambitious.

Graeco-Roman Hospitality

Graeco-Roman virtues were part of a culture that eclectically combined a variety of traditions. By the first century AD, philosophers began to elaborate the thought of the ancients into a more applicable and reasoned system. Their goal was to expose improper moral conditions and persuade others to a more rational life aiming at virtue or the good. Abraham Malherbe describes the general atmosphere of the day as enveloped in the conviction that "reason was the basis of the moral life." Philosophers were convinced that "right conduct depends on correct knowledge" and tended to fit ethics into a comprehensive system. Despite unique philosophical schools or sects (Platonists, Stoics, Cynics, and Epicureans), each with its own *telos* regarding good or human life, "their teachings tended to blend." Consequently, one studying with the philosophers "would likely come away with an eclectic moral system, derived from various teachers." In the Roman Empire, Stoicism dominated the ethical landscape.[130]

Much of the New Testament writings, especially those of Paul, were written against this backdrop characterized by the rationalistic and eclectic.

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[128] Leviticus 19:18.

[129] Hans Walther Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), p. 188. As cited in Pohl, p. 28.

[130] Abraham J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), p. 12.

Two features of the Graeco-Roman understanding of hospitality are noteworthy. One is that, with rare exception,[131] notions of hospitality focused on the pursuit of honor and friendship for political, social, or economic advantage *within* one's own community. The clear ethic was that bounty and power were to be reserved for suitable persons; that is, persons of bounty and power. The second feature of Graeco-Roman hospitality is related to the first: The stranger is regularly eclipsed. This was due to the Graeco-Roman tendency to prize honor within a culture of the heroic. The eclipsing of the stranger is, in fact, the site of much of the information we have about notions of hospitality in the Graeco-Roman culture, as critiques arise. Both early Christian writers and Graeco-Roman politicians and philosophers were concerned about the emerging favor of Christians garnered by their treatment of those on the fringes. The latter was a significant factor in the professionalization of hospitality, as the notion of hospitality as public service, as a means to garner public favor, unfolded in the fourth and fifth centuries CE.

A notable critique of Graeco-Roman hospitality was that of an early Christian writer, Lactantius. Lactantius rejected the notion that the homes of the illustrious should be open to illustrious guests, that bounty should be reserved for suitable persons. He argued instead that "the house of a just man ought not to be open to the illustrious, but to the lowly and abject. For those illustrious and powerful men cannot be in want of anything."[132] Greek and Roman views of hospitality stressed reciprocal obligations between host and guest. The tradition emphasized the worthiness and goodness of recipients rather than their need. Relations were often calculated to benefit the host. In Lactantius's words, such hospitality was "ambitious" and offered for "advantage."[133]

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[131] Perhaps most notable were the Epicureans who followed their leaders' reaction against the political philosophy of Plato. Stanley Stowers remarks on their desire to receive a larger circle of humanity, including women, slaves, and children: "He [Epicurus] became convinced that the party strife, violence, and state religion of the *polis* was unnatural and dehumanizing. Epicurus' radical alternative was withdrawal from the life of the *polis* into communities of 'natural friendship,' which repudiated the Greek pursuit of honor and renown. Epicurus even allowed women into his semi-ascetic communities." See Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter-Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), p. 39. As cited in Rollin A. Ramsaran, "Moral Philosophy and Friendship as a Background for Paul's Letters," *Emmanuel Reflections* (Johnson City, TN: Emmanuel School of Religion, 2004), p. 9.

[132] Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes*, bk. 6, ch. 12; *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Eds. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1867-72), vol. 7. p. 176. As cited in Pohl, p. 18.

[133] Ibid.

Other Christian leaders such as Jerome and Chrysostom saw that hospitality was to be a significant context for remedial relations in transcending status boundaries by providing a modest and equal welcome to everyone. Jerome went so far as to warn clergy not even to curry favor with the wealthy in the interests of the poor. It would be better, he insisted, "to depend directly on Christ, who lived on the bread of strangers" for the provisions of the needy, than to compromise "holiness with ambitious entertainment." True hospitality was about extending to strangers the quality of kindness and respect usually reserved for friends and family.[134]

An example of complaints of political leaders about the favor and influence of early Christian practice came from the Emperor Julian. In Julian's attempt in AD 362 to reestablish Hellenic religion in the empire, he instructed the high priest of the Hellenic faith to imitate the Christian concern for strangers. "Why do we not observe that it is their benevolence to strangers, their care for the graves of the dead and the pretended holiness of their lives, that have done most to increase atheism [Christianity]?" He ordered the establishment of hostels for needy strangers in every city, as well as the distribution of corn and wine to the poor: "For," he said, "it is disgraceful that, when no Jew ever has to beg, and the impious Galileans [Christians] support not only their own poor but ours as well, all men see that our people lack aid from us. Teach those of the Hellenic faith to contribute to public service of this sort."[135] It was Julian's efforts, as Illich points out, that saw the first "Samaritan houses" for the poor emerge, fully funded by the public purse. Here, too, the Graeco-Roman practice of hospitality becomes a means to garner reputation and power, a common affliction of imperial power. It is also the beginnings of the institutionalization of dealing with the stranger as categories of needy come to be identified (poor, homeless, sick) to improve efficiencies.

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[134] Jerome, Letter 52: "To Nepotian," in *Select Letters of Jerome,* pp. 217-219. As cited in Pohl, p. 19.

[135] "The Works of the Emperor Julian," in *The Apostolic Fathers* by Kirsopp Lake, Trans., Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), vol. 3, pp. 67-71. As cited in Pohl, pp. 43-44.

Early Christian Hospitality

Partly in continuity with early Hebrew understanding and practice of hospitality and partly in reaction to both current Hebrew and Graeco-Roman practices that associated it with reciprocal benefits, early Christian commitments pushed hospitality outward toward the weakest, those who seemed least able to reciprocate. The distinctive quality of Christian hospitality in the ancient world is found in the welcome to the least without concern for advantage or benefit. Ivan Illich points out that although the Greek god Zeus was the god of the stranger and their protection, this care and protection was only for the Hellenes, the Greeks themselves. That is, while the Greeks knew that there was an inside and an outside, their notion of hospitality extended only to those on the inside; it was not for humans in general.[136] By the beginning of the Common Era, hospitality in Hebrew culture had suffered a similar fate. Illich observes that the "the breaking of the hospitality to the ingroup" might be considered "the key message of Christianity."[137]

Jesus' teaching had been that, intentionally, His followers were to cross socioeconomic and moral bridges, pushing the definitions and dimensions of hospitality outward to include those whom it might, in fact, be inconvenient to host: "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers, or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the dead."[138] Ordinary hosts invited their friends, relatives, and business or political acquaintances to their banquets to solidify existing relationships. In this they also reinforced existing social barriers and anticipated repayment. In contrast, hosts who anticipated the hospitality of God's gracious rule welcomed those on the margins: the poor, the lame, the crippled, the blind, the homeless, the stranger—those who could bring only Presence to the table.

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[136] Ivan Illich in conversation with Jerry Brown. *We the People"* KPFA, Los Angeles, March 22, 1996. Retrieved July 26, 2004, from http://www.wtp/archive/transcipts/ivan_illich_jerry.html

[137] Ibid.

[138] Luke 14:12-14.

How did this arise? Illich declares that it is "an extension of the incarnation," the *ensarkosis* ("enfleshment") of divine Other, in the Christian story.[139] Just as Jesus did not abide by the principle that "birds of a feather flock together" but, rather, "became *sarx*" (lit., "flesh"),[140] so too should His followers have the same mind: "who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, . . . but [rather] *morphed,* taking the form of a servant, being made in human likeness."[141] In the same way the eschatological relationship with Others is a banquet to which all from every tribe and tongue would be welcomed, without favor or privilege. So earthly hosts ought to open their tables, not merely as an occasion for consumption, but as an open proffer of friendship to the stranger. As Thomas Oden[142] points out, it is not so much "a singular act of welcome as it is a way, an orientation that attends to otherness, listening and learning, valuing and honoring."

Jesus intensified sacral notions of hospitality made explicit in the incarnation by equating it with the warm welcome of the Divine. That is, beyond hospitality as a duty is hospitality as convergence of social and spiritual relationships. This is evident in the story of the final judgment that is found everywhere in the literature on Christian hospitality. To sheep on his right hand, Jesus said:

> Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger, and invite you in . . . ?" The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did to me.[143]

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[139] Illich (2000), p. 6.
[140] John 1:1.
[141] Philippians 2: 5ff.
[142] Amy Oden, Ed., *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook of Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), p. 14.
[143] Matthew 25:31-46.

Welcoming the human stranger in the teaching of Jesus is a sign of welcome of the divine Stranger. There is in every stranger something of the Divine. Hospitality and worship were closely intertwined. Facing of the Stranger signals holy ground.[144]

The presence of the Divine in the stranger signals the profound vulnerability of the face-to-face encounter that is the heart of hospitality. Illich draws attention to this in the story of the Good Samaritan. He argues that the story is not about "how we ought to behave" toward our neighbor as most interpretations from the third century describe.[145] In the story an expert in Jewish law, eager to justify his own position in relation to the two great commandments (whole-being love of God and love of neighbor as oneself), asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" He didn't ask Him, "How does one behave toward a neighbor?" or "What does it mean to be neighborly?" but "Who is the one whom you call neighbor?" In the story Jesus responds with the story of a traveler who was mugged and left for dead beside a road. When two of the traveler's countrymen came along, one a priest and one a Levite, they passed by. But a Samaritan, seeing the injured man, expressed his compassion when he stopped, bandaged his wounds, and transported him to an inn, where he contracted the inn keeper to care for the wounded man until he returned. "Which of these three," Jesus asked, "do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"[146] Jesus, Illich says, was after something far more robust than an abstract ethical principle to be used as an instrument of control within a specific in-group. What Jesus was after was precisely the opposite: to break the limitations of hospitality to the in-group, to extend mercy to the Other who is not from one's own hut—the Stranger. The Samaritan, from among those who had no dealings with the Jews, the traditional enemy, turned to face the wounded man, which, Illich says, is also "an inner turning," not determined by birth, by condition, by language, or by *ethnos*, but simply because there is "no way of categorizing who my neighbor ought to be."[147] Rather, it has been created "by you."[148] I will return to the implications of this inner turning for hospitality later.

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[144] Oden, p. 15-17.
[145] Illich, 2000, p. 5.
[146] Luke 10: 25-37.
[147] Illich, 2000, pp. 5-6.
[148] Ibid.

Writers of the New Testament report that the vulnerability of such relationships was familiar to Jesus. He is portrayed as a gracious host, welcoming into his presence those who, like himself,[149] received no welcome: prostitutes, children, tax collectors, women, diseased/morally deficient, Samaritans, and sinners. His welcome frequently angered those who saw themselves as the preferred guest at social gatherings, as the defenders/definers of moral, ideological, or racial purity.[150] In his own life Jesus experienced the vulnerability of also being a homeless infant, a child refugee, a homeless adult, and a despised convict. Christine Pohl says that this intermingling of guest and host roles in the person of Jesus is what makes the story of hospitality so compelling for Christians. "Jesus welcomes and needs welcome; Jesus requires that followers depend on and provide hospitality. The practice of Christian hospitality is always located within the larger picture of Jesus's sacrificial welcome to all who come to him."[151] In this, hospitable welcome is envisioned as a personal loving embrace. It always has faces.

The New Testament writings also bear evidence of the practical importance of hospitality. It has place, food, and time. Jesus' ministry began at a wedding feast, where Jesus as guest helped the host discover the best wine when the supply fell short.[152] Jesus was the host at the feeding of 5,000 strangers on a hillside. And in an upper room Jesus used bread and wine to inaugurate memory (Catholic) and enliven memory (Protestant) of the cost of welcome. A shared meal is the most visible sign of hospitality and, according to Oden, of the hospitable nature God's Kingdom.[153]

In keeping with the centrality of earlier teaching, Paul urges believers to "pursue hospitality"[154] and makes being "hospitable" one of the qualifications of leadership in the Christian community.[155] The writer of Hebrews reminds believers, "Do not forget to

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[149] John 1:11.

[150] See, for instance, the story of Jesus in the home of Simon the Pharisee, receiving hospitality from a prostitute (Luke 6:36-50).

[151] Pohl, 17. When Jesus sent out the 72 in Luke 10, they were to go with nothing (not sandals, cloak, or purse). They were to take only the experience of having been with Him, and they were to stay with people who would provide for them to build relationships with the them. There was to be no itinerancy, only gift exchanges in being simultaneously host and guest.

[152] John 2:1ff.

[153] Oden, p. 14. See also Christina Pohl, who calls hospitality a "reflection and reenactment" of God's gracious rule (p. 29).

[154] Romans 12:13

[155] I Timothy 3:2; also Titus 1:8.

entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it."[156] The writer of I Peter challenges the community to "offer hospitality to one another without grumbling."[157] Hospitality in all of these instances reflects a certain eagerness to embrace Other with the same kind of respect and kindness that one would offer one's family and friends, to move it outward to strangers. Stories of open doors, open arms, open tables convey this outward movement.

As noted previously, the connection of the stranger to hospitality is lost in the English word *hospitality* but is quite robust in the primary Greek word for hospitality, *philoxenia.* Here the general word for love or affection (*phileo*) for people who are connected by friendship, family, or faith is combined with the word for stranger (*zenos*). The radical practice of hospitality portrayed in the first Christian communities in Acts, including the sale of capital assets for the sake of buying food for those who had none,[158] authenticated early Christian relations, not as an abstract universal duty, but as a free, unconditioned response to people with basic requirements of food, shelter, water that meant opening a door or extending a table.

In the fourth and fifth centuries Christians developed many hospitals (*xenodochia*), particularly for the care of the poor, both local and strangers, over time becoming more specialized according to a person's category of need. With the Constantinian change that made Christianity the official religion in the Roman Empire came funding and administrative supports, along with a growing desire for the efficiencies of institutional care. In the face of the growing institutionalization of hospitality, John Chrysostom (347-407) advocated eloquently and persistently that hospitality was a face-to-face, gracious, unassuming, nearly indiscriminate, and always enthusiastic personal encounter. Such an encounter established a moral bond between people, which would be destroyed by hospitality as a state duty.[159]

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[156] Hebrews 13:2.

[157] I Peter 4:9.

[158] Acts 4:34ff. Also Acts 6.

[159] Chrysostom saw personal hospitality as a means of breaking down the social barriers that had been so powerful in Graeco-Roman culture. Welcome and equal treatment were the proper response of Christians. He urges Christians to make a guest chamber in their own homes to provide for a local poor person if they are hesitant to host a stranger. See Chrysostom, Homily 14 on I Timothy, *A Select Library of*

Hospitality, while practical, was so central to life because it was deeply embedded in the identity of the first Christians. They were regarded as "resident aliens,"[160] an image prefigured in the "wayfaring Aramean" (Abraham)[161] but brought to explicit focus in I Peter.[162] Christians were to live as strangers in the world, practicing hospitality to strangers. Alien status positioned Christians, in the New Testament and later Christian literature, for different loyalties and relationships and distinctive lifestyles framed by the transience of possessions and a high value for life. Monasticism throughout the Middle Ages carried the tensions between the separation ideal and hospitality to the stranger. Among the Benedictines, and some other modern providers of hospitality such as the Catholic Workers Movement, as well as isolated Protestant providers, this tension has provided a strong sense of humility. 'Two strangers helping one another' has been a powerful metaphor and check on the patronizing and institutionalizing tendencies that seem omnipresent on the threshold of welcome. Following the Constantinian change in the fourth century, these institutional pressures became increasingly pronounced. As the *corpus Christi* (the body of Christ) becomes *corpus Christianum* (the body of the christened society), bureaucratic efficiencies subsume openness to the stranger.

Patronizing the stranger has been among the many risks of practicing hospitality. Mistakes were made and will continue to be made. In many ways it is a fragile practice, easily undermined by instrumentality, manipulation, and personal advantage, a point that I will develop further in the following chapter, "Making Strangers." This fragility makes hospitality a risky practice. As Levinas underscores, however, it is not risk that is at the heart of hospitality; rather, it is surrender: "Is hospitality not a solicitation to its addressee, 'Friends, all that I have, all that I am is at your disposal?' . . . Is it not an incessant alienation of the ego . . . by the guest entrusted to it, . . . being torn from oneself for another in giving to the other the bread from one's mouth, . . . a hospitality that does

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the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series, Philip Schaff, Ed. (Buffalo and New York: Christian Literature Company, 1886-90), vol. 6, p. 805.

[160] A term used by Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989). Hauerwas and Willimon develop the notion that the compelling vision of Christian communities is to come to some self-understanding prior to activities designed to save the world.

[161] Deuteronomy 26:5.

[162] I Peter 2:11.

not expect reciprocity and withdraws nothing from guest?"[163] Stories of hospitality in early Christianity contain similar requirements of risk, courage, and surrender to be able to practice it well.[164]

We turn now to the question of what happened to Christian hospitality. Along with this question we will find some clues to what has happened to the Stranger in Western culture.

The Corruption of Western (Christian) Hospitality

If hospitality to strangers was such an important part of Christian faith and life, how did it virtually disappear in the Christian West? Why is it that only now is a "practical shift toward an understanding of our everyday behavior in terms of particular virtues and vices . . . just getting underway"?[165]

The thought and practice of Ivan Illich (1926-2002) has much to offer regarding the demise of hospitality in the West. As described earlier, Jesus, in Illich's thought, broke the limitation of hospitality, and all ethics for that matter, to one's performance in one's in-group. Instead of being shaped by the customs of one's own place, by obedience to one's culture or shaping by families and community laws that defined "I," Jesus asserted that human beings must find their ultimate purpose and identity in the free, gracious response to other persons, including strangers. His incarnation and execution demonstrated this new freedom that he invited his followers to share—not just to love, but to suffer betrayal of this love through the development of new forms of power. Illich calls this freedom 'for' loving the other "an entirely new horizon," "the new flowering of Christian virtues."[166] In short, one's neighbor is determined by oneself.

For Illich the choice to face the Other is central to hospitality. His principal thesis is that this has been complicated in the contemporary world. Why? The answer revolves around this question: Why is it that two Jews (in the story of the Good Samaritan) walk by without helping their beaten countryman? Why is it that a stranger who had no ethical

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[163] Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Alphonso Lingis, Trans. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), p. 79.

[164] Similar notions exist in Buddhism as well.

[165] Richard Kyte (2002), "Introduction to Hospitality," *Analytic Teaching*, Vol. 23, No. 1, p. 22.

[166] Illich, 2000, p. 4.

obligation (because ethics, as shown previously, had come to apply in most of the ancient world only within the boundaries of specific cultures) becomes the host to someone who is not of his own people? What made this choice to face the other possible for the Samaritan? What is making the choice difficult/impossible for moderns?[167]

Illich outlines a number of factors that seem to hinge on a freedom 'for' others, generated from a new relationship with the Divine—the Divine who became flesh and who related to each person in the flesh. One facet of this relationship is that it is, in Moltmann's word's, "an open offer of friendship" to every human being.[168] This invitation to face the other transcends cultural borderlands of what is common decency that restricts some relationships as off limits. Whereas the two Jews were bounded by religious restrictions, the Good Samaritan's religion enabled an enjoyment of that free, trusting, unmediated relationship with God whereby he could step out from the shadows of the guardian spirits of Samaritan culture to provide hospitality for an enemy. His worship of Other liberated him to stand against the powers of tradition and purity. "In a certain way he was superior to the most powerful demons, watchdogs, dragons, menaces which in the world before guarded the 'we.'"[169] By faith the Samaritan was free of the terror that guards the Jewish stranger, as well as the fear that carefully guards his own estrangement from him. "Perfect love casts out fear."[170]

Implicit in this free relationship of the Samaritan with the beaten man is that the Samaritan was becoming a new kind of being himself. As he freely responded to the beaten man, this "glimmer of mutuality" became the foundation for a sense of proportionality.[171] Embracing the stranger (to me) makes me understand that I am I, "precisely because you, by allowing me to love you," give me the possibility to be

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[167] It is important to note that the notion of choice here should be seen as an act of recognition and not as an isolated act of will. They are related, but in Illich's thought the former gives birth to the latter in a kind of 'flowering.' But I think the order must not be pressed too far, for the simple reason that we are such hopelessly whole people who speak to a complexity rather than specific order. In other words, I think it is as possible for isolated acts of compassion, for instance, to create new sightlines about people as vice versa.

[168] Jurgen Moltmann, *The Open Church: Invitation to a Messianic Life-Style* (London: SCM Press, 1978), p. 117. *Open* in Moltmann's vocabulary means that our autonomous identities no longer require others like us to affirm us; rather, we take pleasure in accepting all, no matter how different, as we have already been accepted by Christ.

[169] Illich, 2000, p. 17.

[170] I John 4:18.

[171] Illich, ibid.

proportionate, to come again to where I fit in the personal, gratuitous gift that all of life is.[172] It's the approach to life of my Grandmother who used to invite my twin sister and me to her house across the yard for afternoon tea (lemonade). When we would leave, she would always say, "Thank you for gracing me with your company!" The presence of the Other is defining gift—a kind of reality that is beautiful in itself. "I am free to choose with whom, or better, to accept from whom I want, to whom I let myself be given the possibility of loving. . . . It goes beyond Plato and Aristotle and beyond Greek mysteries. It says your *telos*, your end-purpose, the goal of your being is your choice of charity."[173]

In relation to this new kind of being that the Samaritan introduced, Illich is careful not to couch individuality in terms of ego or personal identity, but in terms of the "I" upon whom the Samaritan stumbled he discovered his mutual humanity/life with the mugged stranger. As Illich says, "I cannot come to be fully human unless I have received myself as a gift and accepted myself as a gift of somebody who has, as we say today, distorted me the way you distorted me by loving me."[174] It is out of this I-and-you and, I hope, others such as the innkeeper that community emerges from hospitality. It is important to note here that others are not my mirror, a way of seeing myself, which is open to abuse, manipulation, and bondage. I am not merely a social entity; I am an intrinsic gift, an I-and-you. I have continued to re-vision my relationship with the Grade 5 ne'er-do-well and the teacher who thought me so, which I have constantly tried to justify. Contrary to what Illich says, this is *not* my choice that I make on my own, but rather out of the freedom and grace that emerges as I *re*-vision who-I-am-in-relation, the gift already Present.

Facing another person has been confounded in the contemporary world because people find it more difficult to detach themselves from the idea that what we look at has been manipulated and programmed by someone else. Traditionally, the gaze was conceived as a way of 'fingering,' whereby my eyes touched your face and established a relationship between the two of us. "It was from your eye that I find myself. . . . It is not

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[172] Illich, ibid.
[173] Illich, 2000, p. 38.
[174] Ibid., p. 6.

my mirror. It is you making me the gift of that which Ivan is for you."[175] This relationship was called "vision." After Keplar, the idea developed that the eyes are receptors into which light brings pictures from the outside, keeping you separate from me, even when I gaze at you. The eye became a tool, a machine, whereby I may find out something about you, but not know you in the traditional sense. So we speak of *interfacing* with each other, as if we are programmed the same way. This undermines, Illich believes, the deep Otherness that actually invites us to know more than ideas and characteristics, to experience hospitality. A significant aspect of this is the flattening of the world as we experience it by the screen.[176]

Human experience becomes flattened to the screen. When I filter persons through the screen, I see simulacra, masks, instruments, not persons. How can one say "I am someone who wants to respect you, who wants to look up to you, to love you for who you are?" when my consciousness is that you have been made up? "The radical shift of the gaze from *knowing* to *knowing about* undermines the mutuality of personhood." As Illich observes, "I have to make my mind up whom I will take into my arms, to whom I will treat as a vis-à-vis, that face into which I look, which I lovingly touch with my fingering gaze, from whom I am as a gift."[177]

It is the conflation of persons to the status of instruments that makes the possibility of facing the Other difficult in the contemporary world. This contributes, more than anything else, to the disappearance of hospitality in the West. The notions of Keplar, Galileo, Newton, among many others, were part of processes that already had a long history in Western relational consciousness. Shortly after the Constantinian change, the church became the main device for over a millennia in proving that the state could be Christian by contracting the church to make space for those who showed up. Once ordinary Christian households provided a door, a face, an extra room, and a bit of bread for the Stranger, who was understood as the Lord Jesus when He knocked at the door and

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[175] Ivan Illich, "Land of Found Friends." Transcription of a radio conversation between Ivan Illich, Jerry Brown, and Carl Mitchum. Transcript published in *Whole Earth Review,* No. 90, Summer, 1997. Retrieved June 2004 from http://www.aislingmagazine.com/aislingmagazine/articles/TAM22/Found%20Friends.html (p. 5).

[176] Illich, 2000, p. 28.

[177] Illich, 1997, p. 7.

was without shelter. Now hospitality is part of a powerful apparatus of financial and social control as the church becomes coextensive with the state in the *corpus Christianum*—the body of the christened society. The first gifts of funds from the state under Constantine went to the Bishops for setting up Samaritan corporations for homeless people. By creating welfare institutions on behalf of the state, the church could claim unlimited amounts of money, because the task was unlimited. As an instrument of institutional and bureaucratic controls, the state church apparatus co-opted free, loving relationships—the foreshadowing of hospitality as hospitality industry.

The principal feature of the institutionalization of hospitality to Illich is the co-opting of God's incarnation. In short, the incarnation involves the *ensarkosis,* or becoming flesh of God, which also makes possible the *theosis*, or man's becoming God.[178] Whereas the incarnation invites great freedom to meet Jesus in whomever I choose to love according to whatever and whoever s/he is, it also invites its corruption, involving great hubris to define the needs of the stranger and to meet those needs through techniques of human instrumentality and efficiencies of bureaucratic machinery. Belief in the sovereignty of man immediately triggers the efficiencies of institutionalization and social control. This was reinforced because the church, in its growing power, began to understand hospitality as the fulfillment of an obligation, a rule, rather than the fulfillment of humanity born in mutual relationships. Whereas the early church understood sin as broken relationship, the later church viewed sin as broken law, a notion that renders the modern Western individual particularly vulnerable to state control.[179]

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[178] Illich, 2000, p. 17.

[179] This view found a ready justification in the law-grace dichotomy of Augustine in his opposition to Pelagius. Luther solidified the notion by boldly inserting 'grace alone' in his reading of Paul, a notion that runs deep in Western theology. One aspect of this is that it plays out rather well in a therapeutic society where the practice of freedom from calls and obligations produces great estrangement. Another aspect of this strong dichotomy has been a latent but pervasive anti-Jewish stereotype. Thus law and the Old Testament 'book of rules' is easily assigned to the Jews and have been "superseded" by the free gospel of Christ. This, unfortunately, played itself out in Luther's diatribes against the Jews and in significant ways in Europe's treatment of the Jews to the present day. Suffice it to say that as Krister Stendahl has suggested, Augustine and Luther seriously misread the New Testament, particularly Paul, who was not concerned with personal guilt but with Jewish-Christian relationships. Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *Paul Among the Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), pp. 78 -96.

The subsumption of hospitality as a free relationship continued in 1075 when Pope Gregory VII introduced *The Dictates of the Pope*. This introduced the legal supremacy of the Pope and the clergy under the Pope over all secular authorities, which in turn became the foundation for the transformation of the church into "a perfect society," an independent, legally constituted, bureaucratically organized state that controlled every aspect of life.[180] By 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council pronounced that "every Christian will go, under penalty of going to hell otherwise, grievous sin, once a year to their own pastor and confess their sins."[181] Prior to this private matters of confessions were dealt with in the context of more redemptive notions of community. Now they become a juridical and criminal matter in front of a singular judge. Bureaucracy created a need (private guilt) that needed its own solution. This is the prototype, to Illich, for modern social consciousness. So from the Middle Ages onward the Church attempted to build an earthly order, replacing faith with power in an attempt to regulate charity, guarantee hope, and ensure salvation. This corruption of Christianity, Illich says, has been the model for the major institutions of modern life, including education.[182] This has created an impersonal world, the central feature of which is "human management of the Divine,"[183] with increasingly fervent attempts to make the world a better place and perfecting it by law. But it is profoundly counterproductive, as Brunner points out: "The legalistic type of person finds it impossible to come into real human, personal contact with his fellow. Between him and his neighbor there stands something impersonal, the 'idea,' the 'law,' a programme, something abstract which hinders them from seeing the other person as they really are, which prevents them from hearing the real claim which the neighbor makes."[184] Along similar lines, Illich says, "Through faith what I see and feel, I know to be creation. What I see as real I know exists only by participation in the divine goodness. But the world in which I find myself is mostly an artificial world, a manufactured construct ever further removed from creation, a world in the hands of experts who presume, through a kind of transcendent pride, to

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[180] Illich, 2000, p. 11.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Illich, 2000, p. 40.
[183] Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1947), p. 73.
[184] Illich, 2000, p. 40.

manage it."[185] In the embrace of human management and control, what has been forgotten is that how we know what is needed becomes a complex negotiation, highly susceptible to manipulation and indignity. Of course, the imposition of solutions creates its own despairs and sufferings. Witness Canadian residential schools.

In summary, the early Christian understanding of hospitality, particularly as it is reflected in the story of the Good Samaritan, opened the possibility not only for great freedom 'for' the Other in whomever I lovingly embrace, but also for its *ersatz* or counterfeit. Hospitality is transformed into an instrument of service, regulated and serving interests of power. For modern, Western people, facing the Other is no longer a free, faith-filled act that embodies Personhood, but an obligation, a duty, under the powers that require them.

And the Other? Although physical needs may be attended to, personhood remains in the ditch, autonomous, estranged.

How can we live with Other, distant and removed? I turn to two horizons to understand this; one has to do with how Other is categorized and, in the process, eclipsed. I will probe this in Chapter 3 in examining the underpinnings of the modern self and its episteme. Chapter 4 will examine conceptions of truth that are imbricated in this exclusionary tendency, together with a hopeful Other-side.

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[185] Illich, 2000, p. 30.

CHAPTER 4:

MAKING STRANGE: REFLECTIONS ON HOSPITALITY AND METHOD

You can add up the parts
But you won't have the sum
You can strike up the march
There is no drum
Every heart
To love will come
But like a refugee. (Leonard Cohen, "Anthem," 1992)

Deep within the structures of Western epistemology (Greek: *episteme*, or "knowledge"; and *logos*, or "discourse") are postures by which the knowing subject has come to *stand over* the world, particularly with claims to superior and objective 'foundations' to access knowledge. *Webster's Unabridged International Dictionary* (1976) defines epistemology as "the theory or science that investigates the origin, nature, methods, and limits of knowledge," but it is the seemingly limitless claims to knowledge that have been noticed as a problem.[186] From this lofty perch the Western *episteme* also makes value/validity claims about knowledge; that is, claims about what may or may not qualify as knowledge and the extent to which it does.[187] How these postures are coming

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[186] This is one of the primary sites of the postmodern turn in social theory that was so heavily influenced by French philosophy (see below). But the protest is not the exclusive domain of postmodernism. Those interested in ecology and human sustainability, such as Wendel Berry (*The Way of Ignorance* [Emeryville, CA: Shoemaker and Hoard, 2005]); or ecopedagogy, such as David Jardine (*"Under the Tough Old Stars": Ecopedagogical Essays* [Brandon, VT: Solomon Press, 2000], especially the essay "Ecopedagogical Reflections," pp. 87f.); or human spirituality, such as Theodore Roszak (*Where the Wasteland Ends: Politics and Transcendence in a Post Industrial Society* [New York: Anchor, 1973]. Roszak protests the arrogant debunking spirit of modern science that shrivels the world and the human spirit with it [pp. 66ff.]); or Christian spirituality, such as Dallas Willard (*The Divine Conspiracy* [San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1998]); or Christian theology, such as Carl Raschke (*The Next Reformation* [Grande Rapids: Baker, 2004]); and Stanley Grenz and John R. Franke (*Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001]).

[187] See, for instance, Robert A. Segal, "In Defense of Reductionism," in Russell T. McCutcheon, Ed., *The Insider-Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion* (Cassell: London, 1999), pp. 139-163. Segal

to be questioned (the debates are ongoing) is part of the epistemological crisis that has emerged since the 1960s in the Western academy. The crisis expressed itself first in structuralism, which relativized the sciences using its own method of linguistic (Ferdinand de Saussure) or cultural (Claude Levi-Strauss) analysis. Structuralism suggests that individual acts and words can be understood and meaning exposed only within specific frameworks of social and linguistic structure(s). Poststructuralists, on the other hand, see no rigid structures of meaning in (claimed) facts about texts or their supporting structures. They see no facts, only interpretations. In poststructuralism, postmodernism, and postcolonialism, under the earlier influence, respectively, of Jacques Derrida (1930-2003), Helen Cixous (1937–), and Michael Foucault (1926-1984); Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924-1998); and Franz Fanon (1925-1961), texts of power are exposed or opened up by cutting meaning loose. These scholars challenged the way that the postures of dominance were situated in architectures of Enlightenment knowledge, which could be sustained only through the oppression and silence of the Other (persons, communities, cultures, economies, religions, etc.). The deeply contested nature of these questions becomes particularly hegemonic when one voice, that of untrammeled reason, justified by the transformations of science and technology, pulls rank as the only story.

Standing over others is particularly problematic for an inquiry into "hospitality, the Stranger and pedagogy," because a part of this totalizing story is the relational story that is caught up in inevitable progress, which proclaims with the certainty of faith that civilization (a.k.a. Western civilization) will blossom, one and all will share prosperity

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argues with Mircea Eliade, a leading exponent of "the participant point of view" in the study of religion, that whereas the 19th-century approach to social phenomena was tied to the peculiar interests of the social world of the social scientist himself, contemporary interpreters typically strive to overcome their own professed biases. However, he debates Eliade's contention that understanding religion is best achieved through a hermeneutical approach; that is, within its own religious terms. Segal argues that religion is in fact reducible to empirical terms such as what might be produced by psychology, sociology, anthropology, and so on. In fact, his two key arguments in this article are (a) that "reductionistic interpretations of religion *are alone* [emphasis mine] possible for nonbelievers" and (b) that reductionistic interpretations *may be impossible* [emphasis mine] for believers" (p. 158). My point here is not to weigh the merits of either of these contentions or the variety of assumptions with which they are inscribed such as notions of history and humanness, but to point out the exclusionary presence in such debates. As postmodern philosophers, following Nietzsche, have pointed out, such exclusions contain power bids. Inhospitality is *within* civilization, within the gates of its own self-definitions.

and freedom, and peace will reign *if* we embrace these approaches that continue to deliver proven results. Or so the story goes.

What these particular modern epistemologies (rationalism and empiricism) and methodologies (technoscientific) claim is a world with carefully defined limits to knowledge and reason, a world of show and tell, with no depths but surface everywhere (positivism) and noncontradiction (rationalism). What the concurrent methodologies conceal is a matter of great hubris, not just because of the failure to understand themselves as self-enclosed sovereign/totalizing constructions, but also because in their sovereignty/totality they answer to no one. Furthermore, by determining what may be known, what value it may have, *and* how this knowledge and its value are to be determined, the rejection of all categories but its own, the erasure of any possible voice of protest or suffering, happens with deep violence. This is the logic of Western inhospitality.

A myriad of issues are involved in standing over the world: science and rationalism as artifacts of Western culture, what it means to be human, the meaning of civil order, democracy, and freedom and education as something of a purveyor of these, the interface of particular Protestant understandings of faith in upholding myths of the autonomous knowing subject, the dominance of constructions of self-identity as opposed to communal ones, and how those constructions foster openness to persons or close doors, and so on. In the current chapter I am interested particularly in the latter question: What is the interface between the stable (autonomous) self and stable (objective) approaches to knowing, and how do these unfold in Western relationality? Methodologies are never value neutral. They contain architectures that shape researchers and research and ultimately define who-I-am-in-relation. What is the connection between the dominant Western episteme *(alla* rationalism) and the loss of warm-hearted hospitality, sometimes expressed in the actual sacrifice of the Other?

Requirements of the Stranger

How do we hear the Stranger present at the door, even in our research? What are the epistemological and methodological requirements[188] of the Stranger, of hospitality, and their interstices with pedagogy? How do we come to 'see' the Other in the ditch as something more than a "category of oppression" and embrace them as neighbor[189] warmly, even generously? How might I conduct research that provides warm welcome rather than distance, dominance, and/or abandonment? The problems are these: How do I allow the Other to be *present* in inquiry? How could I even in research respond to persons in ways that are compassionately responsible? Put less gently, how can persons and their relations be thought about without sacrificing them? Even if a position of objective distancing is desirable, it has been shown to be utopian.[190] Is it possible that the methodological requirement of the Stranger is not from within a tightly held *tabula rosa* (Locke), where distance becomes the condition of inquiry? Is it possible that understanding the Stranger and/or my relational encounter with her/him is on a lightly trod path that becomes the well spring of nurture and transformation?[191]

The epistemic and methodological requirement of the Stranger and the possibility of hospitality would seem to be presence and understanding, the immediacy of respectful openness to who or what arrives on my doorstep, with all the baggage of lively relations. Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), who was as interested in understanding persons and their relations as texts, says similarly, "It is the experience of strangeness that makes

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[188] In 2002 the University of Leeds, Centre of Cultural Analysis conference theme was "Understanding Hospitality/Altering Class." One particular workshop, entitled "Xenophobia in Eastern Europe Today," was particularly troubling to me. It featured four presenters, one from France, two from England, and one from Yugoslavia. Literally millions of people are affected today in the West by fear of the stranger, but only one face, one voice of the stranger (a young Yugoslavian graduate student) in the conversation. In a visit with a Chinese delegate, she remarked to me how the session had missed the "epistemological requirements of 'xenophobia'." The Western *episteme* often conceals its interest in power.

[189] "Neighbor": Greek verb, *plasiadso*, "to go near; to approach"; Greek noun, *plasion*, one who is near or close by; Anglo-Saxon, *neah*, near; *gebur*, a dweller; a "fellow man" [*sic*]. See *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (Chicago: Consolidated Publishers, 1976).

[190] Joachim Wach, "The Meaning and Task of the History of Religions," In Russel T. McCutcheon, p. 91.

[191] Ibid.

interpretation, the work of hermeneutics, necessary."[192] Hermeneutics honors a certain presence of the Other in the liveliness of both the infinitely interpretable and the ever-evolving history (Dilthey) or tradition (Gadamer) that makes it so. I will have more to say later regarding the constraints of history/tradition on the dogmatic relativism that is sometimes attributed to Gadamer. Suffice it to say here that the invitation of hermeneutics is to a dance of mutuality and understanding, each understanding infused with its own blood lines, ancestries, stories, contestations, joys, and sorrows, as a "rediscovery of the I in the Thou" (Dilthey). It also resists postures of standing over Other, as proclaimed by Kant, Locke, and others, as well as postures of standing in isolated autonomy, *separate from* Them, as Descartes proclaimed.

Hermeneutics also seems to be what pedagogy requires. Pedagogy, as the communal way in which responsible compassion is opened to the young (and ourselves, because it is communal), requires not the permanence of quantity and literalism that arises out of fear of the loss of permanence, but rather the arrival of a person. This is part of a larger argument to come in this project, that pedagogy *may be* an open door to community, that the context of learning about life is hermeneutical community. What Jardine says of pedagogical writing applies: "Pedagogical writing—writing that *is* pedagogical, not simply about pedagogy—must be interpretable. It must *allow the arrival* [emphasis mine]. Hermeneutics is pedagogical."[193]

How do we allow the arrival of the Stranger? Or, more precisely, if the Stranger is already facing me (Levinas), how do I *make strange*, pushing them away? I want to look into this question through three lenses. First, I want to look at the subtle and not so subtle ways in which I, inscribed in this particular culture at this particular time, can effortlessly, justifiably, and even with a certain tag of virtue, create sacrificial Strangers using methods. In this there is also an attempt to unmask that which lays concealed in stable[194] notions of personhood and relationality. I hope to creatively engage relationality

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[192] Wilhelm Dilthey. As cited in David G. Smith, *Trying to Teach in a Season of Great Untruth* (Rotterdam/Taipei: Sense Publications, 2006), p. 105. Originally quoted in H. P. Rickman, Ed., *Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Writings* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 78.

[193] Jardine (2000), pp. 176-177.

[194] The notion of a *stable self* is allied with the Greek notion of *essence*, which is pictured by later medievals as the "essential self" at the hub of a wheel, with the various false faces as spokes, bumping

as experiences, of *estrangement*, in the more storied, narrative form that they occur. I want to describe, nested within these stories, some tracings of how methodologies designed to fix the world—and sometimes even in the desire to understand it—have complicity in its deep agonies, including obliteration of communities and communal selves, some beyond consolation, unbearable abandonment, and exclusion. These are in some senses irrational words, but then so are the consequences of holding rationality over the world to reduce and control it.

Second, I will examine briefly how inhospitable relationality is meshed with the philosophical wrappings of the Western episteme. To the extent that the Western episteme has not taken into account the Strangers *inside*, on Their own terms, to that extent, They are allowed to circulate unproblematized, and sometimes, because of Their subtle nature, even without detection at all.

The Banality of Estrangement

I was sitting in my office early in this project, caught up in what I was doing, when even in partial deafness I heard a clear voice coming from my doorway: "So . . . did you get me pegged the other day?" she asked. When I looked up, one of my former students had poked her head into my office. Behind her playful smile I knew that there was something more. I had spoken with Gail (a pseudonym) two days earlier in a series of unstructured conversations with alumni, students, or their friends, some of whom were strangers to me, about experiences of hospitality and estrangement in education and life. She was not a stranger, but an alumnus, working as a chaplain in a local hospital, and I had a longstanding rapport with her. The ensuing conversation helped me to understand that even though one thinks one has rapport, the possibilities for estranging are forever

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along, responding to the world, or acting purposefully in relation to it. A helpful notion of some spiritual writers pictures persons operating out of two basic impulses that arise within relationships, the *anima magna* and the *anima pussila*. The former is seen as the seat of 'bigness,' compassion, and generosity. With the latter arose all things shrivelled, greed, meanness, pettiness, and so on. See Daniel J. O'Leary, *Travelling Light* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2001), pp. 51-53. I think this latter configuration is more in keeping with the notion that identity, as David G. Smith puts it in *Trying to Teach in a Season of Great Untruth* (Rotterdam/Taipei: Sense Publications, 2006), "is never a stand-alone phenomena; it is always constructed through the scaffolding of others" (pp. 31-32). When I use the term *stable self*, I am referring to the mythical "Rational Autonomous Self" of the Western Enlightenment (Smith, ibid.).

present. Of course, rapport also enables a certain truth telling that makes healing easier, but that is another discussion.

These conversations were, for the most part, quite spontaneous and unexpected "when the Other shows up," much like one experiences hospitality as a living thing. It had an uncomfortable feel at first—people just showing up, no appointment, no invitation, and conversations around their studies and how they were experiencing them. Although the students were never led to address it directly, in the backdrop were scores of questions about why some theology students suffered a growing sense of alienation while often excelling at their studies. The conversations became easier, and I felt good about them and the thoughtfulness that it sparked in me as well as between us. I was also encouraged when I began to care more about the students themselves and their struggles that were emerging in this very free, undefined, unrehearsed environment, over a drink or lunch or a walk in nearby Confederation Park, or sitting under the trees on our campus. The question of distancing and alienation began to gain real traction for me, especially as the conversations kind of led us. I found myself often getting lost in the deep, rich, local knowledge (Berry) that inhabits people's lives and can emerge not just as one more interesting thing, but also as the very fabric of life, of who I am in relation, quite beyond my "wanting and doing" (Jardine). Sometimes, in fact, we shared asking questions as well as responding to them in exchanges in which there seemed to be little obvious distinction between host and guest, but only common memories of presence and absence, abandonment, or exclusion, long forgotten, finally given voice. And I was growing in my eagerness to allow the arrival. Things, however, are not always as they seem.

I had as well worked out a kind of theory of conversation that would underpin the project to produce whatever outcomes there might be. I wanted to look into the eyes of hospitality and estrangement, as a *spiel* (a play) to be enjoyed, as an expression of who we are in relation to them *and* to one another (Gadamer). Rather than to be delved into with categories and topics (*topos*; lit., "surface things"), the people and texts of life were to be entered into as living things, with lively though silent traditions, archeologies in each memory and forgetting. Gadamer describes this conversational encounter: "To conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the object to which the

partners in conversation are directed. . . . In order to be able to ask [the questions], one must want to know, and that means knowing that one does not know. . . . To ask a question means to bring into the open. The openness of what is in question consists in the fact that the answer is not settled."[195] Of course, the "openness of a question is not boundless. The question has to be posed."[196] It is posed from a horizon of "fluid indeterminacy" that is "concretized in a specific this or that."[197] Thus the experience of hospitable encounter would "announce itself," with the genealogies, histories, conflicts, debates, and so forth that inhabit it (Jardine).

However, there was also a discomfort, quite deep, actually, a nagging fear that what I was uncovering wasn't really research. It felt bogus, and it did so because whatever this definable thing called research was, I wasn't in control of it. So I had decided prior to my initial visit with Gail to reinforce the structure of it a little, to make my questions more sequential, a little more linear, more defined—moving well beyond Gadamer's advice to "have a sense of direction," which is "the essence of the question."[198] I wanted to ensure that I had covered off what I was after. I had a deep sense of fear, of disappointing the myth of assured or valid results that would perhaps not contribute as valid research is supposed to do.

A part of my intention to reinforce the conversations with more structure, as well, was that I wanted to do the research efficiently, in the time that I felt I had to get it done. Although the questions still weren't in any specific order, with Gail I felt that I was in complete control of the conversation to address my need for efficiency.

Another aspect of this new and improved approach was that, despite having spent my professional life trying to interpret texts and people, there was a fear about whether the value of the insights would be worth anything. Raised in methodologies that clearly favored professional over local knowledge, I had lingering questions about whether research that included me as a participant rather than as a looker-in from above, or at least from outside, actually qualified as research. It was actually quite debilitating at

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[195] Gadamer, pp. 356-357.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid.

times, and I felt frozen like a deer in the headlights: *Where was my expertise in a world where, whatever else professionalism is, it is about distance, not intimacy? What qualified me to speak out of the abyss that was my own estrangement from the life teaming before my eyes? Would this alchemy be useful after all?* The questions kept me awake nights. The logic of the Western episteme, which was part of who I was, was a relentless logic.

Concealed then under this regime of new and improved, of efficiency, of the desire for valid results, were these deep-seated fears,[199] shadows of my apparent loss of control. The improvements had nothing to do with the spaces that had already been opened for health through the reflection and remembering, partial though they were, of the joys and heartaches of experiences of warm welcome and closed doors. They were about fear. Though painful it was to acknowledge this, I have also taken great comfort in the possibility that the estrangement experienced here is itself not something to be overcome or fought against, but to be reconciled (lit. *put together again)* as well with all of its own relations.

"So . . . did you get me pegged?" arrived through the only encounter that so consciously focused on the regime of new and improved, efficient research methods. I had felt good about the initial encounter with Gail. Things had gone well. However, when I invited her in to find out what she might mean by "Did you get me pegged?" self-congratulation melted quickly.

She pointed out that it had felt like a "one-way conversation" to her, that we really weren't together in conversation. While I was asking the questions, it was obvious to her that I wanted "to get on to the next one" after I had heard "certain things," to get on with what seemed to be "an agenda behind" the questions that filled in "the blanks" of what I was really after. She said that she felt like a "data slot machine" into which I was "just

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[199] Greek, *phobos*, fear; from *phebomai*, to fear: (a) to flea from terror; to be startled with the unfamiliar or strange; (b) feeling of disquiet or anxiety caused by the presence of danger; and (c) to stand in awe. I use the term here in the sense of definitions (a) and (b), which largely subsume possibilities of definition (c). I am learning that if I open my door to the Stranger with a sense of awe, the "disquiet or anxiety" becomes more proportionate. Could it be that this passion that excites us to pursue security and control also excites us to embrace the Stranger?

plugging coins" that fit my categories. Once she sensed that, she said, she just wanted to "play it safe," to be "relevant," to give me "what I wanted to hear."

The more we visited, the more it became clear that my fears, exhibited in a brash determination to carry on controlled research, that is research within my definitions and predetermined categories, had actually pushed *her*, One with face and presence, out of the encounter. My desire to create assured results had actually created a result called abandonment.

Upon further reflection, it has become clearer to me that *pegging Persons* might be an apt description at the heart of Western relationality—at least mine. Currencies are pegged to some standard such as gold, the American dollar, or the like to define both the value and the performance of the economy. Pegging also carries a certain sense of permanence, a security, a stability. A cobbler pegs a shoe, determining its size by the foot on which it is to fit. A carpenter pegs a timberframe building. Once pegged, the building is defined, its structure unalterable for its life. Once pegged, all that was left was the same fearful retreat to the security of fitting into the construction of predetermined categories and stereotypifications, standards and values, that lay behind the questions I posed. "So did you get me pegged?" was a question about whether she measured up to my preexisting expectations, whether she met my standards of value. Such pegging, designed or predetermined to control my fear, perpetuated it, and in the process obfuscated the very face of the Other and the possibility of warm welcome.

It was also a question close to the heart of the estrangement in the Western episteme: Did *I* get *her* pegged? It is the posture from above, where I stand over her as an object, analyzing her experiences, dissecting them into smaller and smaller bits to rearrange them and possibly *her* into something that I could understand. My new and improved approach had not only excluded her from the space she had occupied upon arrival, but had also pushed her to find refuge elsewhere, in the safety of the responses she thought I might be seeking. My posture from *above* was clearly not the posture of warm welcome, of allowing whoever shows up. It has left me wondering about similar postures implicit in understanding persons psychologically, sociologically, religiously, or politically or in terms of race, class, and gender or whichever category. Do such

categories simply perpetuate a culture of distance and safe retreat for others ("Oh, I'm safe now, in the hands of another!") and indifference on my part ("This is who/what you are!")? What difference would it have made had I received her as the gift she already is, the One arrived at my door, which I embrace because we each and both are one of 6.5 billion and beside each other and therefore equally unique, complex, mysterious persons in ever-changing spaces and times, in a culture of hospitality?

Because of the subtleties, the ambiences, involved in Western exclusion, responding freely to the call of the Other is not easy. Our own fears run deep, flitting from tree to tree like shadow snipers, and the chances of our breathing them in rather than simply deflecting or denying them is difficult if not impossible for similar reasons: We stand over our fears too. Consequently, these "voices of the night"[200] really don't have any place to be heard in the Western imaginary. Unlike medieval maps that had edges and declared "Beyond here, there be dragons," modern maps don't have edges: the world is mapped, and there are no dragons. In a world where there are no depths, only *topos,* fear is the object conquered through vilification ("We will eradicate this scourge of terror") or denial ("There is nothing to fear but fear itself") or medication (with antipsychosis drugs). The delusion, however, that fear is always conquerable or treatable permits it to travel undercover, in the shadows, in the very methodologies that celebrate its conquest. Under the regime of "methodological fanaticism" (Ricoeur), it becomes a simple task to blame others, because the disconnection is implicit in the method.[201] The

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[200] This is the title of a well-known poem that theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) wrote describing the "chains," "the restless tossing of the sleepless," "the sighs and light breathing of the old, who prepare themselves quietly for the great journey," and other *Voices of the Night* in a Nazi concentration camp, prior to his own execution. Those who have studied Bonhoeffer suggest that his own cell of solitude contributed to a growing humanity and compassion out of a deep gratitude for the mere Presence of life and a deep awareness of the shallow ego that keeps him from this grace. See also Catherine de Hueck Doherty, *Poustinia: Christian Spirituality of the East for Western Man* (Notre Dame: Ava Maria Press, 1975), pp. 30f., for linkages between *poustinia* (Russian, "desert") and compassion. I am using *voices of the night* here as a descriptor of realities that have deep ethical implications within Western life, but are beyond its Enlightenment canon. There are surely other voices of the night such as pride of affluence (greed) and other obsessions, anger, and so forth; but fear so easily slips under the radar screen of awareness because the Western self, for reasons that will become clearer below, does not readily embrace vulnerability to such weakness.

[201] This is a significant problem for much of humanities research. Bruce Lincoln describes the common sense of it, for example, in his definitive theses on method in Comparative Religious studies. Thesis 13 states, "When one permits those whom one studies to define the terms in which they will be understood, suspends one's interest in the temporal and contingent, or fails to distinguish between 'truths,'

"celebration of surface"[202] eclipses who I am in relation to the Strange and the Stranger, so that the greatest terror of a post-9/11 world is that *I am* terrified, precisely because terror in the Western myth is not a possibility. What happens to our relationality when we forget that fear *is* lived experience and not reducible to solutions, militaristic, scientific, economic, or otherwise.

The loss of Western memory regarding fear as a guest of the human condition allows abandonment to flourish in the contemporary world, and to do so in almost undetectable ways. A memory of my own, flowing from the courage and vulnerability of Wendell Berry in *The Hidden Wound* (1989), illustrates the clandestine, mysterious movements of fear and inhospitality in the dailiness of life experience.

Berry (1934–) tells his story in a wonderful extended essay[203] that was touched off by the protests against racial discrimination that were going on around him while he was on a research fellowship at Stanford University in 1969. He came to realize that his family and community in rural Kentucky had inflicted a wound on him, a hidden wound. It remained concealed, because it was so subtle and part of the common ways of seeing people and the world, until he was experienced enough to give the wound a name. He then knew that it was *racism.*

Neither Berry's parents nor his grandparents openly insulted Black people, nor did they ride with the Ku Klux Klan. They did not regard themselves as bad people. They simply treated Colored people as an underclass, hiring them for menial labor, calling that labor "nigger work." The Berry family did not entertain for a moment that Nick Watkins, who lived on their farm and could work the fields and livestock with the best of them, had the same intellectual capacity as the rest of them. Equally oblivious to them was that

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'truth-claims,' and 'regimes of truth,' one has ceased to function as historian and scholar. In that moment, a variety of roles are available: some perfectly respectable (amanuensis, collector, friend, and advocate), and some less appealing (cheerleader, voyeur, retailer of import goods). None, however, should be confused with scholarship" (*Thesis on Method*). As cited in Russell T. McCutcheon, Ed. *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion* (New York: Cassell, 1999), p. 398. This was originally presented at the 1995 Academy of Religion as a definition of *comparative religions research.* Why is there such insistence on an etic methodology, especially in light of the hotly contested debates within social science itself on the insider/outsider problem? Surely conversations of some kind between the two viewpoints would not only enrich understanding, but also create a space for human *being* as well as *knowing* in our world.

[202] John Willinsky, *Learning to Divide the World: Education at Empire's End* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 16.

[203] Wendell Berry, *The Hidden Wound* (New York: North Point Press, 1989).

Nick yearned for many of the same things that they did: to marry and have a family, to have a home, and to have the freedom to go where he and his family wanted, when they wanted.

Wendell and Nick were the best of childhood friends. They would hold hands as they walked across the fields, and Nick taught him the lore of the land, of things wonderful and mysterious, plants and animals and, especially, fox hunting. For his 10th birthday party, Wendell prepared a special invitation for Nick. At the party though, he could not understand why Nick could not come into the house. Wendell recounts going out to sit with Nick on the garden wall. Now, 25 years later, Berry was writing a lengthy essay about how a wound that was the source of so much pain had been inflicted so naturally.

Reading the book unleashed a flood of memories for me, particularly about the unconscious and imperceptible ways that we come to open doors to others in gracious hospitality or close them out of fear or indifference. I was part of that world too, though in a different way than Wendell Berry was. My music teacher in junior and senior high was an African-American jazz musician who had moved to our community with his young family. He was a wonderful teacher with a magnanimous personality. He let us know that we should be proud to be Canadian; in Canada he felt accepted. One spring evening, while we were watching television at a neighbor's house, we saw the nonviolent protests of the discriminatory voter registration system in Alabama and people being attacked by police and dogs. I was proud to be a Canadian. I also think that such pride to be living in more favorable circumstances, based on the misfortunate estrangement of people living in less favorable ones, also hides what may be thriving unrecognized closer at hand.

Like the Berry family, ours has no rabid racists. We did not grow up with hatred for African-Americans. We did grow up knowing that the violence perpetrated against them was wrong and that the basic truth through broad media coverage was bigotry. I did not inherit this hard bigotry; but I did inherit a soft bigotry, the kind that says that certain kinds of people are all right in their places, as long as their places are in another part of town or up the road a way. Even the separation of hard and soft bigotry is a voice of the

night, and it hid the fear that I might be found out, that some hitherto unknown secret might be exposed in memory, and that I might be diminished by exposure. Perhaps Nietzsche was right: My claim to truth, even about hard and soft bigotry, is a power bid; I really don't care about life; and perhaps I am even passively resigned to mediocrity. This healthy remembering, however, empowers a desire to at least partially uncover what may be concealed. As David G. Smith writes:

> A teacher who lives well, with a healthy remembrance, is able to talk in such a way that students can learn to see that there is more to life than what appears on the surface—that there is indeed an Other side to everything, a silent archeology in every speech, a secret which inspires every saying, . . . an absence which is always present, . . . and remembering well does not mean just remembering happy times, that is, suppressing the fire by which we might be refined. More importantly, remembering well means remembering how each of us might struggle through life's bittersweetness with the kind of courage that enables life to go on.[204]

There is the strong hint here that space is created for others, through created space for *an Other side to everything,* including an open space, rather than moralistic eviction, for voices of the night that inhabit our own souls, like fear. Healthy remembrance has nothing to do with placing blame on anyone for wrongs done, infringements of my rights, or other insults, all incredibly powerful themes in contemporary notions of justice and national security, as if *I* am to be exonerated, as if I can find the appropriate scapegoat or sacrifice, or as if wrongs could be corrected with their perpetuation, or other sorts of suppression. Rather, healthy remembrance has to do with the courage that "enables life to go on" through an open invitation to understand (*verstehen*) even heartache, brokenness, and fear.

The soft bigotry that I inherited was, for the most part, very subtle too. In Grades 3 and 4 I played a lot with Karl (pseudonym), a boy my age who lived a mile from our home. Karl was from a German Ukrainian family whose father had escaped Stalin's collectivization projects in the early 1930s. The fears from Karl's father's life were translated in their farmyard: Several granaries were filled with horse harnesses.

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[204] David G. Smith, *Pedagon: Meditations on Pedagogy and Culture* (Bragg Creek, AB: Makyo Press, 1994), pp. 179-180.

Long after they began farming with a tractor, Karl's dad bought horse harnesses at every auction sale. Later I found out why: "You need tools to grow grain." Under its simplicity was the harsh control of Joseph Dzhugashvili (1879-1953). In the early 1930s Stalin (lit. *man of steel*) launched a series of five-year plans to turn the USSR into an industrial giant. Factory cities needed food, and getting in the way of the controlled efficiency of the breadbasket of the USSR was the Ukrainian identity, which was communal and lived out at a village level. In processes with ghastly shadows in contemporary economic globalization,[205] Stalin imposed collectivization on the peasantry, along with impossible production quotas for peasants without tools. Six to seven million moms, dads, sons, daughters, uncles, aunts, sisters, and brothers would die in the purges, or controlled famines. Karl's father had escaped. And he would never be caught again without the tools for survival.

My mother was concerned about my friendship with Karl. It wasn't hateful. It was, I believe, on her part a genuine concern for my welfare, especially about some of the fears with which I would come home after play, fears of darkness and an unseen boogey man who Karl's dad said "would get us" if we played outside too late, and a terror of coyotes. More often than not her concerns were expressed along the lines of "You have other friends too, don't you?" Or "Why don't you play with [some other neighbor]?" Or when I asked to play with Karl after school, my mother would look away and give grudging consent: "Be sure you're home by [such and such a time]" (always long before bedtime!), or additional chores would suddenly need to be done. And there were comments about Karl's cleanliness (he had darker skin) and about his folks, about their lack of fluency in English, and their simple ways and the fact that "they don't go to church." These were part of an ambiance of estrangement.

Early on Karl and I were best friends. For most of our elementary years we sat together on the bus, and conversation flowed effortlessly. We played together at recess, ate lunch together, and spent endless hours together after school. Grades 3 and 4 noon

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[205] Mary C. Grey, *Sacred Longings: The Ecological Spirit and Global Culture* (London: SCM Press, 2003). Drawing on African liberation theologians, Grey's thesis is that global poverty must be linked to a commodification of nature by multinational corporations. She is particularly interested in how the market's demand to follow its employment opportunities leads to the dehumanization and break-up of communities and families.

hours were filled with frequent visits to what was called "Bachelor's Row" across the railway tracks from our school. It was a poor street of tiny one-room houses where a couple of poor families lived, but mostly veterans from World War I, a local monument to the nasty business of balancing colonial power in the early 20th century. I think we knocked on most of their doors. Most of them looked out from dark, soulless eyes, prisons of emptiness that would haunt us and leave us feeling sad. We wouldn't return. Later, studying WWI in Social 30, I knew firsthand that "The Lost Generation" meant the utter abandonment of Bachelor's Row, of the living death of having no one to come home to. Their loneliness marked me too.

There was a particular—looking back, I should say *special*—veteran though with whom Karl and I struck up a warm and intriguing friendship. Often he would see us coming and open the door, obviously watching for us. He always had a smile when we came and a plea to stay when we had to return to school. His warmth and his gift to us of a dime each, and sometimes lunch, kept us coming back, often. Sometimes he would ask us to fetch his groceries at the local store. Karl and I knew that the 'gifts' of tales of other places (mostly Scotland, France, and Belgium), lunches, and dimes filled his loneliness and us with chocolate bars and things and places to wonder about together—a highly refined reciprocity. We never knew his real name, though he talked with a Scottish accent and proudly displayed a kilt and sword, the only decoration on his walls. He seemed to like being called "Hoppity Kick." He told stories of war and assured us that the wooden leg that caused him to walk the way he did was "a good price" to pay for being rid of the Kaiser's scourge. Neither of us knew who the Kaiser was at the time, but we knew that he must have been evil because of the easy acceptance of misery.

I don't remember why Karl and I started visiting Bachelor's Row, apart from the fact that we enjoyed adventure and each other's company. We were the only ones who did, at least in our grade, and I know that no adults encouraged us. I remember well how it ended. My mother had previously expressed her displeasure, but when I innocently told her that we had visited Hoppity Kick one spring noon hour, my mother's announcement was simple and final: "Karl and his friends are not like us, so you must stop visiting the bachelors." Although it may have appeared as a simple announcement, it had a host of

ancestors—and progeny too—that have everything to do with the pegging of people and the fears of the Stranger that threaten the stable self.

The introduction of an *us* somehow against a *them* that *we* were not like was quite hidden at first. I think now it was a form of polite bigotry, though bigotry still. Perhaps the hope was that our family would assimilate Karl to ward off the perceived threat of the strangeness he represented. When estrangement by assimilation fails, perhaps estrangement by exclusion can also ward off the perceived threat of chaos rushing in. Others can strike us sometimes as objects out of place, perhaps even like dirt[206] that needs removal to restore the order, and eliminate the discomfort that blurs boundaries and disturbs identities. Zygmunt Bauman observes that strangers can become "the gathering point for the risks and fears which accompany cognitive spacing. They epitomize the chaos which all social spacing aims staunchly yet vainly to replace with order, and the unreliability of the rules in which the hopes of replacement have been invested."[207] Although heavily invested in Aristotelian assumptions of a stable, unified subject that is deeply inscribed in Western relationality, to such stable, unified subjects the Stranger can indeed "epitomize . . . chaos." And to what else could I possibly ascribe Karl's "dirty hands" than to some suggestion that he was in the category "impure," against which *we* must set a guard?

Them, however, is no mere label designed to distinguish. It is a certain kind of category that calls forth an exclusionary ethical demand. Labeling him as a them turned Karl and his friends into a class of objects that required domination, not relationship. *Them* as a dysphemism (Greek *dys*, "non"; and *pheme*, "speech") is a category that immediately takes the Other outside the "the class of objects of potential moral responsibility."[208] In fact, through the manipulations of symbols of a stable world and of a

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[206] An illustration of this might be behind a story, complete with pictures, run in the *Edmonton Bulletin* in the mid 1940s on the construction of the Alaska Highway. Even though African-Americans provided a significant part of the labor, there are none in the pictures; all of the African-American workers were brushed out and turned into trees or bushes. This was prior to the days of computer alteration, and the *Bulletin* hired my aunt (Doris Horwood), who had just begun a career as a commercial artist, to make the African-American workers disappear into the landscape. She had great troubles with this bigotry, but it was one of her first jobs.

[207] Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p. 162.

[208] Bauman (2003), p. 167.

stable self in it, if I can categorize the Other as "ethnically unclean" (Bosnian Muslims) or *agent corrupteurs* (the Tutsis[209]), traitors (Russian Jews), terrorists, part of "an axis of evil," excluding the Other becomes not only morally justified, but also morally necessary. The rhetoric of the Other's inhumanity *obliges* the stable self to practice inhumanity and support such inhumanity with superior moral claims. The Hezbollah is termed a terrorist organization that therefore ought to be destroyed. So the rhetoric of estrangement goes. If there is insufficient justification to dominate others within the histories of communities or peoples, masters of estrangement will rewrite the histories, fabricate injuries, or invent threats, including hints—something as innocuous as "they are not like us." Of course, in the fever pitch of national paranoia in 2004, the cry of "weapons of mass destruction," fabricated though it has proven to be, was all that was required to underwrite aggression in Iraq in the ongoing war on terror.

I think it is important here to see this estrangement operating *within* civilization. It is (too) easy to redeem modern narratives of hospitality and inclusion, either by pointing to the inhospitality of others elsewhere ("Rwanda? That's in Africa, isn't it?"[210]), or simply by passing off such things as colonization, slavery, treaty breaking, and so forth as things of Another past, perhaps some earlier stage of human development ("They're just Stone Age people; what do you expect?"). *Then* is *now*, and *there* is *here*. Inhospitality is *within* civilization, not in some uncivilized, nonrational, evil world *out there*; exclusion dwells within the Western self. Estrangement begins at home.

In the shadows of this place and this moment, turning Karl and his friends into a *them* operates at an even deeper level than simply as a dysphemism to make my abandonment morally good. It strikes at the root of mutual humanity. If indeed the "I" is always preceded by a "Thou" that calls it into being (Buber), and if this restless unsettleable relation is at least part of what it means to be human, identifying "them" as "not like us" is not just an attempt to assign "them" the status of inferior being, but also

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[209] The genocide in Rwanda was in large part the sad "collateral damage" of earlier colonialism. Thanks to the efficiency of Belgian anthropologists, every Tutsi and Hutu family was identified in the 1930s.

[210] A chapter title, and indictment of the West's attitude to the slaughter about to take place in Rwanda, given the radicalization of racial difference by colonizers, designed to control. See Romeo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil* (Toronto, ON: Random House, 2003).

an assault on our mutual humanity. As in Wendel Berry's story, Nick had to be a 'nigger' first before qualifying as a human being, but Berry understood it as qualifying himself as well as Nick. Such estrangement by debasement is glaring in the conquest of the Americas, in the former apartheid policies in South Africa, in much of the popular/ political treatment of First Nations peoples in Canada. It is also deeply rooted in the current neoliberal economic agenda, not only underwriting debasement of poor nations and peoples as "cheap labor," but also debasing consumers as "units of consumption" for the utility of increasing the wealth of a few.[211] I come to be like the Dictator Pig in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* who declares that "all the animals in my domain are equal. It's just that some are more equal than others." Rather than accepting and appreciating difference, I use it to destroy the mutuality of my own humanity.

The debasement of the Other also exists in the deep, often hidden desire to be something or somebody that is particular to both Hellenistic and Western modes of relating as autonomous, stable selves. Debasement arises from the fears about what I am not or what I have not achieved. I posit visions of self, such as I am clean or morally better; I am smart or educated; I am good looking, thin, or sexy; I am successful or entitled to a certain lifestyle; I am free to be, do, or own whatever I want because it is the real me. When the way is blocked for my desires, when my debts can't be paid, I find consolation in manipulating the externals of life rather than facing the voices of the night that cause me to define myself in these thankless, loveless, and, above all, arrogant ways of knowing self in the first place, as if I could. The estrangement is not just that this stable self is denied in the process, leaving it disconnected, isolated, and alone, but also that in its claims to be the only game in town, such self-enclosed visions blind me to the river that is bigger than *I*. This truncated vision of life often oozes rage. For if or when the realization dawns that "This is not what I am" or "This entitlement (substitute *promotion*, *recognition*, *barrel of oil*, *moral cleanness*, *loving partner*, etc.) will not be mine," the stable self cannot bear the shock of the crisis and lashes to the attack.[212]

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[211] As Nicholas Boyle puts it in *Who Are We Now? Christian Humanism and the Global Market From Hegel to Heaney* {Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), "As far as the market is concerned, *I exist only* in the moment of making a single commercial choice" (p. 153).

[212] Dietrich Bonhoeffer adds that the love of particular visions or dreams of community, despite honest, earnest, and even sacrificial intentions, not only is a flight from responsibility for the Other, but also

Is the stable identity standing over the world the seed of genocide, the 20th century's final solution for the Stranger? However it relates to the mystery of exclusion, standing over Other is a part of one of the oldest Judeo-Christian stories that underwrites Western notions of pegging people or putting them in their place. At one level the story of Cain and Abel[213] is the story of one brother killing another; it contains the lesson that competitive rivalry is part of hearth and home. But it is, I believe, much more the story of *us* and a defined, distanced *them* and of a distance that seems to be preserved at all cost.

Abel and Cain started off as two brothers with the same parents and equally respectable occupations: Cain cultivated the land as a settled landowner, and Abel produced meat as a nomadic shepherd. They also had equal access and ability to worship the Other. There were, however, sharp differences and inequalities too. As firstborn, Cain was named to honor his parents' fertility; his name means "to produce," "to bring forth." On the other hand, Abel was a kind of "also-ran" in the family circle, an unprivileged child who just happened along in the accidents of life. His name means "breath," "vapor," "worthlessness," "nothingness." The sacrifices they offered in worship of the Other were equally acceptable in form: The entitled Cain brought "the fruit of the ground" (vs. 3) and the poor Abel brought the best ("fatted portions") of the prize veal ("firstlings"; vs. 4). Understanding the delusions of the stable self, it might be presumed that Cain, out of a sense of the order and privileged control of life that had made him a landowner, had brought any old basket of fruit or that Abel, out of a sense of gratitude for the generous produce of wilderness scarcity beyond his own "wanting and doing," had offered "a fat firstling." In any case, Yahweh noted the difference and, in a profound act of hospitality, inverted the "order of inequalities" that Eve's privileged naming had established, as well as Cain's subsequent privilege, and Yahweh "looked with favor on

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actually destroys communion, without which authentic community cannot arrive. Instead of being alongside, the posture of the visionary is standing over, demanding that everyone else live up to our vision, acting "as if his dream binds all people together." See *Life Together* (John W. Doberstein, Trans. [San Francisco: Harper, 1954]), p. 27f. This also poses a significant challenge to both universalist and communitarian visions of hospitality. In a sense, they continue to exist as totalizing dreams that are pure abstractions of the messy world of hospitable relations in which I embrace the Other in a communion of bits and pieces that is never complete and sure to fall short of the dream, but I embrace Them nonetheless. Alistair McIntyre traces some of this to the Hellenic fantasy of identities based on "the heroic." See *After Virtue*, p. 257- 258.

[213] Genesis 4:1-16.

Abel and his offering" (vs. 5), but not on Cain and his offering. Probably not too much should be made of the precise reasons for God's notice lest, in honor of my naming "acceptable worship," I produce fresh victims. Besides, it is Cain's response to this unthinkable, incomprehensible, unfair inversion, the rewriting of his stable identity, that is the heart of the story.

Is it possible to hear the privileged voice of Cain? "To bring forth sets the values of life, not Nothingness! It's unfair! I'll set it straight!" It is a simmering, deadly mix of betrayal of privilege, envy that *nobody* should be received and *somebody* not, and anger that Cain's sense of justice and valuation had been exposed as deep injustice. Pervading it all is the deep fear that who I thought I was could be unseated. It is a kind of "logic of one" that goes like this:

> Premise 1: "If Abel is who God declared him to be, then I am not who I understand myself to be."
>
> Premise 2: "I am who I understand myself to be" (the "bill of rights to conquest" of the stable self).
>
> Premise 3: "I cannot change God's declaration about Abel."
>
> Conclusion: "Therefore Abel cannot continue to be."

The stable self has an apparently faultless logic of one that defines the world and everyone's place in it, with only one referent, Itself. Even the Divine Other who seemed aware of body language was treated with silence when They asked Cain, "Why are you angry?" To answer would be an admission that there is Another. "To produce" answers to no one. And when They asked Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" Cain turned his relationship into a logical abstraction: "I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?" Abel had a face, but Cain refused to look into it, seeming to desire his faultless logic of one at all cost, his sole ambition to preserve his sole horizon: Myself. And why not, if the face of the Other has been erased?

Here too, as the stable self stands over the text as it stands over the Other, it never gets held up as a mirror that I might see self in the Other, in mutuality. It gets held up as story of self-congratulation and innocence. I am, after all, Abel in the story, aren't I? And Cain is *them*; in classical Christian thought, "the Jews." And in some Jewish and

contemporary Christian eschatological thought, Cain is *them*, the Kenites who are Israel's neighbors who refuse to acknowledge God's special grace on Israel. Such use of the text contributes much to endless disaster in the Middle East today. But as Claus Westerman has pointed out, this is "primal history."[214] That is, it is a story intended to underscore that *every* person is potentially Cain and Abel, *us and them.* In primal history there are to be no stable identities, only possibilities for who I might be,[215] including the possibility that I might do the evil that is privileged as good. So where I dwell with Cain "east of Eden," he is marked not for revenge, which would perpetuate the cycle of violence, but for protection—to question, perhaps to converse, and possibly to break the cycle. The relational inversions in the story are intended, I believe with some precision, to disrupt my sureties about who I am, and particularly to question my sense of proportion and scale about who I am in relation to Others. The *mark of Cain* is designed to decategorize him as evil. But he is to be embraced as one beside, not over, lest the cycle of violence continue.

Both of these inversions then open possibilities, not so much for an unstable self constructed out of random situatedness or psycholinguistic forces that have entitlements in their own, often self-enclosed instability, with similar capacity to make more victims; as for a communal, hospitable self that understands difference in terms of generosity *to* and *with* Others, where all belong, rather than privilege for self where others are put in their place or vanquished. It opens the possibility that in this journey called life, I might practice mutuality with 6.5 billion Others, *and at the same time* stand in an incommensurate relation to Them. The hope of hospitality is in this space and moment of

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[214] Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (John J. Scullion, Trans. [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984]), p. 318. As cited in Volf, p. 93.

[215] I think Hannah Arndt made this point well. In her response to the trial and testimony of Adolf Eichmann, one of Hitler's architects of "the final solution," she argues that Eichmann was an ordinary person, a kind of everyman who out of a mix of conditions and choices did what he did. See *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963). Similarly, Enrico Deaglio tells the story of Giorgio Perlaski, an Italian beef buyer trapped in Budapest, Hungary, who took on the identity of the Spanish *charge d'affaires* to intervene in the extradition of thousands of Strangers being loaded onto cattle cars. The argument of the book is that what Perlaski did was a common thing, "what anyone would do," albeit rooted in courage and care (Enrico Deaglio, *The Banality of Goodness*, Gregory Conti, Trans. [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998]).

tension between mutuality, having much in common, and incommensurability, being unique, particular, and having little in common—but still belonging with Other.

Am I compelled to accept all behavior and every notion that comes along? Certainly not. Is there still a place for criticism?[216] Hospitality as we think it might be imagined is about seeking a space and moment for whoever shows up whenever, however, and for whatever reason they are present. This doesn't mean that criticism disappears; rather, it actually opens a space where, together, ideas and behavior might be accessed in a more communal way, even with small children, so that love might be learned rather than power. Being present with the voices of the night, including the dark voices of destruction, exploitation, manipulation, and dehumanization, there to be unfolded in a kind of communal hermeneutic—is this not at least one possibility for exposing that which appears as darkness? Could power be inverted by hospitality if, as participants in a mutual journey, *we* allow *ourselves* to be enlivened by our mutuality as texts, regardless of what they are, that is, to have their way with us? The critical approach as employed, for instance, in sociocritical theory, centered on "my object of critique," has already created distance in that it defines an autonomous (my) abstraction (object) to be critiqued (by applying some value or values that I have defined, but which may not be the call for who has arrived now facing me. I think this is a rich seedbed for inhospitality. On one level it destroys the possibility of love and awe by not allowing texts of Otherness. In other words, if I don't have a word or a category for that which is before us, it doesn't for

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[216] The word *criticism* is derived from a family of Greek words beginning with *kri*; hence *krino* ("to discern"), *krisis* ("deciding"), *krima* ("judge, the one discerning"), *kritarion* ("benchmark," "criteria"), *kritikos* ("one who has discernment"), *anakrino* ("to investigate"), and *apokrino* ("to answer," "to vindicate"). In turn, the word is related in root to the Latin *cerno*, "to sift," "to resolve," or "to value." (See Friedrich Buchsel, *"krino, krisis, krima, et al,."* In Gerhard Kittel, Ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1965), pp. 921-954. *Criticism* is used here as "discernment that opens conversation," not as an authoritarian dictation based on some absolute will or truth. Criticism as discernment that opens conversation is positioned then not in a kind of hostility or even abandonment of the Stranger facing me, but in communal interpretation that seeks to embrace. Although both of these notions have a history in Judeo-Christian tradition, it is also clear that the tendency to see criticism as a kind of totalizing, final word or judgment arises when theological terms are conflated into judicial ones (ibid., p. 926). If the notion of judgment is left within its own covenantal context, then the invitation of criticism is clearly relational. The ethical order, particularly in the New Testament, is not "an order of demand," but an "order of being" (ibid.., p. 940). Even the eschatological dimensions of judgment, as in "final judgment," are to be understood within this relational order of being and not the dictates of law. In concrete terms it means "Come, let us discern things together."

that reason mean that Other has disappeared. When I am allowing myself to be read or "played" (Gadamer) by Other, Other holds sway.[217] Yes, there is the possibility of manipulation, but there is also the possibility of love, of being present with Other in a text of mutual Otherness. Hospitality involves great risk. But the role of the critic involves manipulation from the start. Instead of being "read" by Other, as critic I am immediately standing over Other, declaring "This is what is happening here." This is also close to Carl Jung's view that the more we understand (people and their symbols) cognitively, the further we get away from what is really there. We have the feeling of having understood and explained something, but in so doing "we are getting further and further away from the living mystery."[218] In this respect also, criticism, at least as it exists in much of the Western academy, has had the effect of pushing divergent voices apart into ever more disparate specializations tied to the aims and interests of those within a given community, with little or no conversation between communities and therefore no opportunity for truths to "emerge,"[219] including the truths of mutuality.

The fact that the constraints on Karl and my friendship had been couched in terms of trusted motherly care, like Eve's naming of her children, at the time it made them appear all the more innocent. Later it served to underscore that there can be quite noninnocent ways of being innocent. The naming of Karl and Hoppity Kick as a *them* not only closed doors on current relationships, but also established conditions for setting a guard of privileged suspicion *above* those not like us, for future ones. In doing so *they* were/are pushed beyond the call of warm welcome and made, quite innocently and with perfect logic, homeless, where Other or brother is no more.

Over several years I learned a feeling that Karl's family might somehow not be good enough for our family; that, just maybe, my friends were somehow not good enough for me; that somehow I might be better than the rest. Small suspicions that the ground on

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[217] A good example of this might be sitting together with someone without a common language; for instance, with a person who cannot speak, such as a dying person or a speaker of another language.

[218] Carl Gustave Jung, *Man and his Symbols* (New York: Doubleday, 1971). As cited in Anthony Thistleton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (London: Harper Collins, 1992), p. 316, cf. 576ff.

[219] Gadamer, pp. 325 -41. Criticism and hospitality need not be mutually exclusive. The face of Other at the door requires that I embrace 'the critic,' painful though it be, with the hope of inverting the 'finalities' of criticism into something more compassionate in the very presence of embrace.

which Karl and I had lived and found friendship was really not as level as we had thought began to emerge; some are somehow made worthy, whether by certain criteria, standards, or grades, and the hint, ever so subtle, that I might be one of the few among the many, *a worthy us* among *an unworthy them.* Like the ancient Greeks, it was not necessary to regard all persons as having dignity (Latin *dignus,* "worthy of esteem and honor, due a certain respect).[220] Holding others aloof serves to inflate egos and underwrite a sense of privilege and entitlement. Referring to the Stranger as *them* can be a way of removing dignity, so that they can be driven out, dominated, or abandoned in the name of securing dignity or space for us. To peg people is also a way of heedlessly perpetuating hidden wounds by being inattentive to fears deflected.

Genealogies of Exclusion

Of course, the genealogies of assimilation, domination, debasement, and abandonment—the arts of inhospitality—in the West are reflected[221] in understandings of self-forged histories of the age of discovery, the Industrial Revolution, and the Enlightenment. Despite claims to totality, these are situated at least partially in Western philosophy, in which the autonomous self is at the center of life.

In another story then of growing up, Descartes (1596-1650) discovered that much of what he had accepted as a child were falsehoods. He decided "to demolish everything completely and start again right from the foundations."[222] Not only was he no longer content to take things on faith, demanding that his beliefs should instead be turned into

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[220] *Webster's Unabridged.* As Michael Novak points out, "Both Aristotle and Plato held that most humans are by nature slavish and suitable only to be slaves. Most do not have natures worthy of freedom proper for free men. The Greeks did not use the term *dignity* for all human beings, only the few." See Michael Novak (1998), "The Judeo-Christian Foundation of Human Dignity, Personal Liberty, and the Concept of the Person," *Journal of Markets and Morality,* Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 107.

[221] I think it is important for the conversation around relationality to allow ideology to be nested with relationality itself, rather than the usual approach of making it the source of relationality. This latter Enlightenment approach gives privilege to prescribed sequence; that is, our speech and behavior proceeds from autonomous reason. In actuality, although sometimes we may act or speak *from* ideology, I also speak *to* it. For example, in a conflict with a colleague I might ascribe certain ideologies to her/him (Marxist, relativist, Christian, Islamic, liberal, conservative, etc.) to justify, or even hide, some prejudice, envy, or some other self-interest that preexists in me. In this the privileged sequencing allows a preexisting condition to flourish undetected. In an age of media manipulation, in which the sign (Baudrillard) can have limitless spin, it is particularly helpful to see ideology and relationality as unsequenced.

[222] Rene Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings,* John Cottingham et al., Trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), Second Meditation, p. 12.

knowledge, but Descartes also came to realize that at least one thing is certain: *I doubt*. Reasoning that doubting equals thinking and thinking requires a thinker, he became convinced that *he*, defined as "a thing that thinks," exists.[223] Thus emerged the famous Cartesian formula: *cogito ergo sum*.[224] It is not merely the *thingification* of an *I*,[225] of personhood, so much a part of colonial consciousness that is problematic; but it is also, in effect, the *exclusion,* the estrangement of an *Other in relation*, that occurs when the self becomes the foundation, the center and the circumference of knowledge—the objective One. This is the eclipse of *presence of an Other.* Not only is there no room for anyone else, but there is also little room left for oneself, at least those parts of human being, such as my body, that are "not thinking."[226]

How *I, the self*, gets positioned as the adjudicator of truth and value, able to conquer all by dividing and naming it,[227] is central to what might be termed the *modernist manifesto*. It too is a story about growing up. As Immanuel Kant explained, "Maturity is

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[223] Ibid., p. 19.

[224] William Temple once referred to this as "the most disastrous moment in the history of Europe" (*Nature, Man, and God* [London: Macmillan, 1940], p. 57); as in Anthony Thistleton, *Interpreting God and Postmodern Self* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995], p. 49.) Although this might be overstatement, it is a problem nonetheless. It is documented in philosophy (e.g., Gadamer), in theology (e.g., Buber, Brunner, Thieliche), and in ethics (e.g., Dussel, McIntyre).

[225] "Colonial alienation takes two interlinked forms: an active (or passive) distancing of oneself from the reality around; and an active (or passive) identification with that which is most external to one's environment. It starts with the deliberate disassociation of the language of conceptualization, of thinking, of formal education . . . from the language of daily interaction of home and community. It is like separating the mind from the body. . . . On a larger social scale it is like producing a society of bodiless heads and headless bodies." So states Ngugi wa Thiong'o. See "The Language of African Literature," in P. Williams and L. Chrisman. Eds., *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 451.

[226] This has a long history in Hellenistic understandings of *being*, so immersed in the metaphysics of substance at the expense of relationality. This has dominated most reflection on the question, "What is God like?" throughout much of Western Christian history. The question itself is a problem, simply because it renders the divine Other, a "what," a "substance." As Tertullian first translated "one *substantia* and three *personae*," he was rendering Greek into Latin and using an Aristotelian distinction between one *ousia* ("being" or "reality") and three *proosopa* ("masks" or "manifestations"). Heidegger correctly observes that *ousia* in the pre-Platonic world carries much more the notion of presence than substance. According to Stanley Grenz, both Heidegger and some postmodernists tend to interpret the entire tradition (Trinitarian) with more of a dialectical force than an ontological one. In other words, the unfolding of presence and absence, sameness and otherness, the unfolding of being in relation to what is not itself, not being that is in itself, is much more what pre-Platonic Greeks meant by *ousia.* See Stanley Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), p. 193.

[227] Willinsky, 1998.

man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction of another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. *Sapere aude!* "Have courage to use your own reason!" That is the motto of enlightenment."[228] The person who stands on her/his own, the autonomous self, is, for Kant, the mature person. The ideal of the rational, autonomous self as the foundation of knowledge provides great power over Others, not to mention the world. This power is most often expressed in a kind of partitioning of the world, the construction of categories, walls between this thing and that thing, between this group of people and that, until there emerges a perfectly (even pure), well-managed, well-controlled fragment of life, a reflection of my own disembodied epistemic subjectivity, separated from the community of life, our corporeality. In the unrestrained celebration of incommensurability, mutuality is diminished and the range of ethical possibilities greatly reduced.[229]

I think that, at the end of the day, the maturing, civilizing consciousness of Eurocentrism does not hold many open doors for the Stranger. According to the story of Enlightenment, estrangement needs to be overcome by more information, open mindedness, or a broader knowledge. Abandonment is a problem of ignorance found in a student's assessment of suicide bombers: "They don't know any better." This has been a well-worn mantra of relationality in the last two centuries. Ignorance and educational poverty have been regarded as the primary and often sole culprits in the practice of

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[228] Immanuel Kant, "What Is Enlightenment." As cited in McCutcheon, pp. 133-138.

[229] Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberations*, Eduardo Mendieta, Trans. (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities, 1996), p. 154-5. A contemporary example of this is the Rwandan genocide. See Paul Magnarella, "Explaining Rwanda's 1994 Genocide." Retrieved March 14, 2006, from www.du.edu/gsis/hrhw/volumes/2002/2-1/magnar1/a2-1.pdf. This is an attempt to answer why such a disproportionate number of educated people—doctors, nurses, judges, human rights activists, and civil leaders—played such a leading role in the genocide. Part of the proposed explanation lies in the stable identity of radical Hutus as "children of the land." Through a century of first German, then Belgian colonial domination, the Hamitic myth (the superiority of things Egyptian) was demonstrated scientifically (by Belgian anthropologists' measurement of head sizes) to underwrite the superiority of the minority Tutsis. The latter became the privileged land and property owners. So when an opportunity to "cleanse the land" presented itself, it was, as Magnarella argues, not viewed as murder, but as purification of Hutu identity. The resulting barbarism is within the camp of Western epistemology.

estrangement. Enlightenment sees estrangement as a failure of knowledge, a noetic stance that is itself exclusionary, failing to take into account a certain mystery to exclusion that lies beyond both ideology and discourse. To what extent does Other remain outside the horizon of moral responsibility, because I refuse to know better? How much do I push others away because I am selective in what I want to understand? Could it be that the "dead silence of my unconcern"[230] has more to do with the knowledge that serves my interests, even at the expense of others? I estrange Others, not just because I like the way things are, my own stable identity. Nor do I estrange the Other just because I refuse to face who I am in my shadows. I already hate my shadows, so they frequently don't even make it to the table. If I happen to catch a glimpse of a lurking fear, the call of *Ubermensche* is to *courage*, not embrace. I estrange the Other because I like my privileges. I want what They have. In a world of limited resources,[231] I want to "join house to house, field to field, until there is room for no one" and I am "left alone in the midst of the land."[232]

The brutal betrayal of indigenous hospitality, as Europe destroyed the life-space of the Incas, Aztecs, and Mayans, seizing their wealth and conquering them to become the center with no periphery,[233] is as brutal, as Ronald Takaki observes, as the demonization and deportation of indigenous populations in North America, occurring "within the economic context of competition over land and resources."[234] The very

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[230] Bauman, 1995.

[231] The notion of *scarcity* is part of the archeology of estrangement. "Who is entitled when there is only so much to go around?" becomes a particularly exclusionary question when asked by those who are controlling global economic policies. For perspectives from inside the opposition movement to the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund and their role in global poverty, see Kevin Danaher and Roger Burbach, Eds., *Globalize This! The Battle Against the World Trade Organization and Corporate Rule* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2000).

[232] Isaiah 5:8.

[233] See Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of 'the Other' and the Myth of Modernity*, M. D. Barber, Trans. (New York: Continuum Press, 1995). See also Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, Richard Howard, Trans. (New York: Harper Collins, 1984). The desire for wealth and the impulse to murder to acquire it, Todorov says, "is also conditioned by their [Europeans'] notion of the Indians as inferior beings, halfway between men and beasts. Without this essential premise, the destruction could not have taken place" (p. 146). As cited in Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

[234] Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), p. 39. As cited in Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), p. 76.

certitudes of Enlightenment, in allowing only certain kinds of (objective) knowledge and disallowing ever-present voices of the night such as fear, give permission to its own brutality to thrive unrecognized, even while masquerading as progress, freedom, or love.[235] When Enlightenment becomes the sole solution to all of the challenges that humankind faces, it is not a very big step to becoming the final solution. It has also left me wondering whether these attitudes and impressions might have been picked up by Joseph Stalin too, from his own (over?)protective mother, through seminary education, along with the steaming nationalism of his day and the fear of losing pride of place and identity with Europe in the name of its own absolute religion and superior civilization that is forever at the center of it, along with the heaps of corpses.

The issue is not that the narrative of inclusion is totally unreflective of modernity. I am not aware of any compassionate argument for a return to a time when women did not have a vote or minorities were unable to own property or a thousand other repressions perpetrated in the name of "Empire" or "Europe" or some other created absolute, including religious ones. The issue is more that the narrative of inclusion, with its own happy ending of hospitality for all and perpetual peace that is the motto of enlightenment,[236] is held up by our stable selves, as a totalizing story, like some sort of magic mirror to make me feel good about myself. It is a kind of instant facial makeover that perpetuates a myth that *we* are participating in the story of progress (Hegel) with all the other beautiful people, that proclaims that civilization will be led out of darkness into light, and we'll all just get along. As Moltmann asks, what would happen if the mirrors made in the sweatshops of submodernity were held by the emaciated hand of the Other, acquired through protracted exclusion?[237] Would we recognize the gruesome counter-narrative of exclusion within modernity? *Can* the stable self be hospitable?

It is in the context of the self-proclaimed civilizing impulse of modernity that Enrique Dussel also draws attention to the abandonment of the Other as particularly violent. It is not enough that victims of the project are left in misery; it is that they are

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[235] Volf, ibid.

[236] Immanuel Kant, "What Is Enlightenment." As cited in McCutcheon, pp. 133-138.

[237] Jurgen Moltmann, *Public Theology and the Future of the Modern World* (Pittsburg: American Theological Society, 1995). As cited in Volf, p. 59.

made into a kind of virtuous sacrifice, in which perpetrators come to occupy a place of privilege and triumph over victim, where doors are slammed, heedless of the possibilities of fingers present.

This "underside of modernity"[238] secures its legitimacy through constructions of history that give Europe in the last 500 years a differential advantage over the rest of the world. Principally, this is done by reframing Europe as the center of human civilization, in which the peripheries (non-European cultures) are regarded as backwaters and colonial outposts and, as Eduardo Mendieta puts it, "are to be managed, civilized, bureaucratized, and secularized"[239] by the center. This is underwritten by a Eurocentric ethical consciousness that rejects the suffering of the dignified ethical-corporeal subject, an ethical consciousness that is an ethics of negation, dualistic in nature, which regards both the body and living corporeality as a blemish or a hindrance in the pursuit of a metaphysics of the absolute as One.[240] The impact of this metaphysical and anthropological dualism is particularly vivid in its violence in a world where three-fourths live in poverty while the pursuit of the absolute One is the global free market, agendized and defined by the autonomous consumer of the West. So, as Dussel formulates it, the myth of emancipative reason operates as the surface (*topos*) myth, while its underside is the myth of sacrificial reason. The sacrifice of the rest, those who don't but mostly *can't* participate, becomes not only legitimate, but also virtuous through a logic of negation in which the Stranger has no voice; and, worse, through the absolutizing of (rationalistic) epistemological systems and autonomous (Protestant) metaphysical systems, no legitimate claim to one.[241] I don't think it is that the Other doesn't register or that she is somehow unseen. That puts too much responsibility on the Other, as well as removes it from me. Rather, it is my own presence; it is about how I

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[238] Dussel, 1996.

[239] Eduardo Mendieta, "Beyond Universal History: Dussel's Critique of Globalization." As cited in Linda Martin Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta, *Thinking from the Underside of History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000), p. 124. Dussel (1996) more extensively elaborates these arguments. For the conceptual scheme of sacrifice of the Other, see especially *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of "the Other" and the Myth of Modernity*, Michael D Barber, Trans. (New York: Continuum, 1995).

[240] Ibid.

[241] Ibid. See the last section for how this unfolds.

position my (stable) self in relation to the Other. "*I* am *over you. We* are *over them!"* If you are not with us, we not only can abandon you to die in the ditch, but we also have a right to put you there.[242]

According to Dussel, an aspect of the myth of progress is the notions of freedom that underwrite the abandonment of the Other. I have forgotten to ask, "If I am free, who is not?" For the stable autonomous self, freedom for me is really all that matters. In the West I simply go about my own business, desiring to be left in peace, as a Haitian theological student says, "as if nothing in the world matters but a bigger house and early retirement." Or as Romeo Dallaire, lamenting the United Nations' standing by while 800,000 Tutsis, Twa, and moderate Hutus were murdered, says, "No one—absolutely no one—gave a damn." We were called upon to apply "the Mogadishu[243] rule," a rule that declared, "Unless it's in your self-interest, you don't go and waste resources, or risk your people, in their conflicts."[244] My self-interest, operating under a cloak of freedom from obligation,[245] is abandonment , writ large.

In positioning myself *over* the Other, I abandon any connection to self/other, that I am one of 6.5 billion, in uniqueness/sameness, difference/solidarity, outsider/insider, stranger/host. Like the priest and the Levite in the story of the Good Samaritan,[246] I simply cross to the other side of the road and pass by on a predetermined journey in which courageous predeterminations of the self have no space or time for Other, taking

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[242] David G. Smith (2006), pp. 60-65. A similar entitlement to sacrifice the Other often filters through in discussions about the ethics of purchasing cheap goods made by people who are used by global capital as cheap labor: "Well, they can purchase a lot (over there) on .25/hour" or "Well, at least they have a job" or "Well, we all work for the multinationals, some at different rates than others."

[243] City in Somalia where the US lost 18 marines in a pseudo-peacekeeping role.

[244] Romeo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2003), p. 518. Dallaire's account, contains not only an unsavory description of military solutions to human problems, but also a critique of Western abandonment, prized as a virtue of self-interest. Indeed, "the Devil" may be read as the Hutu perpetrators of genocide or European colonizers who created the conditions for it, then proceeded to walk away in disinterest.

[245] One of the principle contributions of liberation theology is that the notion of freedom as the highest good (inalienable) in the formation of Western liberal democracies needs to be inserted into a much larger framework. It is in the framework of vulnerable love (Moltmann) or neighborliness (Gutierrez), that freedom will become *freedom for the Other*, preserving it from collapsing into *freedom from*, or the absence of interference. See Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, 2nd ed., Caridad Inda and John Eagleson, Trans. (Maryknoll: Obis Books, 1988), p. xxxviii. See also Jurgen Moltmann (1995), ibid.

[246] Luke 10:31.

care of (my) business. If others don't have the goods or services I need or want, I make sure that they are held at a safe distance, so that no lonely hearts or wooden legs can make a justifiable claim on my presence or my time. Perhaps, under the sign/symbol of caring, I might flip a panhandler a coin. But neither labeling him nor flipping a coin has anything to do with receiving her as a person and much to do with self-absorbed pity. Under the egis of some hospitable research methodology, pegging a person from some self-enclosed objective distance does similar violence.

In not adequately caring for the gift of the stranger at hand, stuffing my head full of categories (and possibly agendas of data collection and predetermined descriptions), to peg, to write it up, or otherwise to know enough to have something interesting to say, I had missed the opportunity to be interested, to enter the living questions and the living inheritances of the present. As Thistleton puts it, "Mere observation reduces texts and human selfhood to mainly passive objects, subject to our own mental manipulation."[247]

Conceptual distance, which Gail had experienced, is no friend of hospitality, of encountering the Other as Other. When it comes to human research, studying things in which there is mutual interest at stake, calls for neutrality actually obfuscate constructions of power, and their justifications. That is, the powerful, uninvolved observer stands over the powerless, passive subject.[248] Such objectivism arises from the fear-filled egocentric predicament of the Enlightenment project.

The safety of distance was part of Wilhelm Dilthey's (1833-1911) complaint of the Enlightenment period: "No real blood runs in the veins of the knowing subject that Locke, Hume and Kant constructed."[249] Dilthey was interested, not in logical abstractions or causal configurations in human studies, but the relations, interdependent in nature,

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[247] Anthony C. Thistleton, *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self* (Edinburgh: T &T Clark, 1995), p. 51.

[248] Edward Said has pointed out this problem in relations between Europe and the Muslim world—what was once called the *Orient*. Said, a Palestinian, was a significant figure in postcolonial studies. One of his theses was that *orientalism* denotes a constellation of associations, assumptions, texts, political policies, representations, and the like that maintain "the subtle and persistent Eurocentric prejudice against Arabo-Islamic peoples and their cultures." See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1995), p. 3.

[249] Wilhelm Dilthey, *Gesammelte Shriften V: Die Geistige Welt. Einleitung in die Philosophie des Lebens* (Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1927), p. 4. As cited in Anthony Thistleton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (London: Harper Collins, 1992), p. 264.

between the particular and the general in the ongoing stream of life. Such relations are reciprocal in nature to the extent that they are open to the Other, even perhaps particularly in their strangeness, beyond set methods. As Martin Buber would later point out, "Relation is reciprocity. . . . The language of objects catches only one corner of actual life."[250] It is precisely this oddity of the experience of hospitality that we are not *over*, but *with*, facing the Other, that draws us to hermeneutics. As Dilthey points out, "It is the experience of strangeness that makes interpretation, the work of hermeneutics, necessary."[251] Similarly, Smith reflects, "In a way, then, engaging in hermeneutic activity is simply the ordinary work of trying to make sense of things we don't understand, things that fall outside of our taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of experience."[252] In German philosophical tradition, hermeneutics is part of what is called *lebensphilosophie*, or life philosophy. Its interest is not in prescriptions, techniques, formulas, or methods, but in *verstehen*, understanding. It wants to know what makes life Life, what it is that makes life lively, interested, as well as interesting, full of throbbing relationality and interconnectedness.

Gadamer, I think wisely, perceives the encounter of the strange, the alien, the unfamiliar, the different—the Other, as precondition for interpreting and understanding persons. He identifies this in Schleiermacher: "Schleiermacher's idea of a universal hermeneutics starts from this: that the experience of the alien and the possibility of misunderstanding is universal. . . . In a new and universal sense, alienation is inextricably given with the individuality of the Thou."[253] It is worth noting that Schleiermacher applied this principle simultaneously to the interpretation of texts and to the understanding of persons. We become hermeneutically aware when we encounter an Other, *before* we have taken the step of standing over them, placing them in the classifications of our own horizons, defined by categorizations of the past or future. Instead we stand beside, in the now. In Gadamer's words, awareness of the particularity

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[250] Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Scribner, 1970), pp. 67, 69.

[251] H. P. Rickman (Ed.), *Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Writings* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 78.

[252] David Geoffrey Smith, "The Mission of the Hermeneutic Scholar." As cited in M. Wolfe (Ed.), *The Mission of the Scholar: Essays in Honor of Nelson Haggerson* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), p. xxxx.

[253] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 179.

of texts or life or people cannot arise until we have come to experience what it is to encounter the Other "within a hitherto unknown horizon."[254] A transcendent "I" positioned immovably above the pale of experience and relations with lesser mortals turns me into an observer, reducing texts and Others to passive objects, subject to my mental manipulation, my pegging. What started out as an empirical approach resulted not in the openness associated with scientific enquiry, but in taking Other for granted. In effect, an experience of 'thingification' was created, reducing personhood and destroying dignity in the process. Instead of being hospitable, enabling the Other to emerge as Other and to have her/his way in warm exchange, I had reversed the relationship, scrutinizing what was before me as an object of inquiry. My disembodied epistemic subjectivity had deliberately created a distance. From the question "Who is she? and "What are the mutualities and sufferings and joys that call me?" an abstraction emerged: "Where does she fit in my 'dividing up the world'?"[255] I was looking in from the outside rather than accepting the invitation that hospitality is closer to, to ever-new, open-hearted mutuality.

The presence of the Stranger calls me, not to distanced observation or heedlessness, but to a certain reverence and responsive heeding that includes all of who I am—my listening, my seeing, my trusting, my tenderness, my warmth, and sometimes my speaking; always my awe. Rushing in to try to know enough and to categorize had actually hidden the presence of the Other as a bearer already of riches aplenty, embedded in the complete unfamiliarity and strangeness in her Presence at hand. It has also been profoundly humbling to realize that perhaps one of the more significant things to emerge in an inquiry into hospitality literally showed up unannounced at my door, utterly beyond my wanting and doing, as an interruption in the journey. It foreshadows that perhaps within a pedagogy of hospitality persons were meant to be enjoyed and reverenced, not figured out or dissected into smaller and smaller bits, so to control, so to anesthetize or overcome fear.

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[254] Ibid.
[255] Willinsky, 1998.

CHAPTER 5:

REFLECTIONS ON TRUTH AND HOSPITALITY

The more you talk and think about it,
The further astray you wander from the truth.
(On Trust in the Heart, Hsin Hsin Ming)

"Why do I feel so far from God, . . . getting straight A's in theology?" The assumption that the experience of hospitality would be central to learning theology is indeed a very precarious one. There are a variety of ways that an experience of estrangement might arise in a study of theology. For instance, the Other may be as unknowable as some claim, or long-held personal conceptions about Them may be challenged, causing a sense of at least momentary distance. On the other hand, given the trajectories of Western education of the last 200 years, such estrangement may be inscribed in theological reflection and pedagogy itself. It could be that the Other is too knowable, or made too knowable. Given that the experience of estrangement under consideration is of a Western theology student, studying in a Western theology class governed largely by Enlightenment knowing, we want to take seriously the latter possibilities; that is, that the Other is too knowable, or made too knowable.

The focus in this chapter is this: How are the possibilities of openness to the Stranger unfolded in Western understandings of truth, especially those notions that arise under the influence of Enlightenment? What happens to hospitality when the truth *about* propositions is equated with *the face of the Other?* What happens to relationships when truth is reduced to singularities of absolute propositions or moral statutes? How might a pedagogy of hospitality unhinge faith and even faith formation from a philosophical core in theological education that equates knowing about with knowing, or the facts of theology with Other? I am particularly interested here in exploring how notions of absolute truth have come to be accepted as common sense in discussions about truth in

some expressions of Christian faith and how this is played out in distancing Other, with prospects especially for theological education.

At first impression a seemingly abstract notion as truth itself is a great distance from the warm embrace of the outcast, the orphan, or the homeless. To echo Gandhi, what difference does it make to them whether their destruction was wrought by totalitarianism or the holy name of some ideal (such as liberty or truth or democracy)? However, the world seems awash in the specter of even more outcasts, orphans, and refugees as absolute truth gets worked out, particularly in the violence of fundamentalist[256] expressions of life, including those of Christianity. Indeed, the rational deceptions required to define evil in order to resist evil, as Simone Wiel points out, is the basis of all just war in the West since Cicero.[257] Given the extensive linkage between political and religious life in the West since the fourth century CE, it is no surprise that just war practice has followed the Constantinian footprint throughout Western history and

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[256] Fundamentalism in its broadest sense denotes a movement or attitude that stresses strict and literal adherence to fundamental principles. So it can apply to religion, politics, economics, or ideologies of every variety (See *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*). When applied to Christianity, I am particularly interested in the movement originating in the United States in the late 19th century, founded on the inerrancy of Scripture, as a protest to higher critical approaches to Scripture. Although intertwined at points with evangelical Christianity and at certain moments blurry, the latter is to be distinguished from fundamentalism in the sense that they have different roots, as well as a different agendas. Evangelical Christianity has been a quest to rediscover the prephilosophical core of Christian experience, with a broad participation in Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox expressions of faith, across two millennia. It is interested in the life of Jesus as a gracious inclusivity (*Evangelical* is derived from the *koine* Greek word *euangelion*, which means "good news" or "good message"). Fundamentalist Christianity is about rigid application of literalist interpretive principles to every kind of literature found in Scripture for the purpose of extracting moral and propositional precepts. It is often characterized by an agenda of political and/or cultural triumphalism with the latter's inherent exclusivism. It is primarily Protestant, and it utilizes very recent epistemological systems, which I will explore, drawn from the modernist project including the commonsense realism of 17th-century England. Understandings of truth are central to this distinction as well in that *evangelicalism* is concerned with truth as a relational expression and *fundamentalism* with truth as a postulate or proposition, often spoken of as *absolute truth*. However, it must not be forgotten that neither fundamentalism nor evangelicalism can be identified as a perfectly uniform phenomenon. They have themselves a broad array of manifestations that can't be ignored, testimony itself to more polysemic notions of truth that are espoused from within them. For these tendencies and distinctions, see Martin Marty and Scott Appleby, Eds., *The Fundamentalist Project* (5 vols.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991-1995); and Harriet A. Harris, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[257] Thomas Merton appeals to Simone Wiel in defending the view that war is essentially irrational: "The supposed objectives of war are actually myths and fictions" that are activated by "rational analysis." For "the acceptance of war as an unavoidable fatality (or necessary evil) is the root of the power politicians' ruthless and obsessive commitment to violence." See Thomas Merton, *The Literary Essays*, P. Hart, Ed. (New York: New Directions, 1981), pp. 134-139.

that just war theory has been the mainstay of Christian theology since Augustine,[258] who argued that Jesus' teaching about nonresistance was inapplicable to government and that violence is always just, provided that evil is clearly defined. Enter certain brands of fundamentalism, and the face of Other disappears behind the deceptions of absolute definitions of evil. It is the abstractions around absolute truth translated into such totalizing definitions that make for inhospitable conditions of life, that contribute to keeping this discussion grounded.

Contemporary culture seems rife with the inhospitality of fundamentalism. Spiritual sensitivity does not count for much in most versions of fundamentalism: one is either an adherent to the truth or one is not. Conversing recently with a seminary student who shared a painful journey from inhospitality to embrace, I was struck by how such sensitivity is forged in the linkages between the social and spiritual dimensions of life. Prior to seminary he had spent several years in Indonesia teaching English as "a Christian missionary, armed with every argument to justify his faith." He had come to understand over time and through experiences of embrace that "justifying my faith" is quite foreign to "the celebration of God's presence." Over time, he had come to a place where he realized that there are those who "love the Lord" in other traditions than his own, and sometimes live it better than he, something which challenged his entire understanding of faith. His embrace eventually went even beyond Christian traditions in his friendship with an English student who was considering becoming an imam. His Islamic friend had declared that Islam is struggling in the world "because Allah for some is hard to hold as an open question, that it is hard to have faith in this situation." When the seminary student shared his story with the pastor of his mid-America church, the pastor told him that he was no longer welcome, that "it's impossible to name you as one of us if you compromise the truth." The seminary student has concluded, correctly I believe, that

[258] Augustine drew on Cicero (106-43 BCE), the Roman political philosopher, for much of his thinking on 'just war.' Augustine's theory is articulated in Chapter 12 of *The City of God.* See Philip Schaff, Ed., *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Marcus Dods, Trans. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1887), Vol. 2.

"fundamentalism is *exclusion.*"[259] Meanwhile, he continues conversations that have thrown open windows for both him and his Muslim friend, conversations that in many respects reflect unique but parallel journeys, not to mention the hope of hospitality, when I am guest of Other rather than Other's defender.

Of course, the exclusions of absolute truth are acted out daily in the news. George Bush came to power in 2000 on the wings of American Christian fundamentalism and a couple of moral causes that he championed as ideological hinge issues to garner support from that segment of the population. A key architect in pushing the agenda in the late 1990s leading up to the first-term elections was Tom DeLay, Republican Party Whip at the time. He personally raised $30 million in campaign contributions around a battle cry, confessed in 2001, of bringing us "back to the Constitution and to Absolute Truth that has been manipulated and destroyed by a liberal world view."[260]

How does it turn out that absolute truth creates such a relational desert? It is a question made all the more relevant for North American Christians when The Truth Project seems to be the latest strategy to emerge from Focus on the Family, the organization that has played a very significant role in shaping popular discourse around family values and the lightening-rod, "moral absolute" issues of homosexuality and abortion in both the United States and Canada. The Truth Project was unveiled in 2006 as a copyrighted worldview curriculum for the (Christian) masses, accessed for $119 per registration; it is designed "to reinstate control of Western culture" through the promotion of absolute truth.[261]

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[259] This is not hard to appreciate when the president of one of the most fundamentalist Christian colleges (Bob Jones University) has declared "The Bible itself is intolerant, and true followers of God should be as well."

[260] DeLay played a key role in the control of information to the American people in the early years of the Bush administration by ensuring that favorable voices received the supposed inside scoop. He laid out the ground rules for "reporting the news" to a crowd of national reporters gathered at his office in November 2001: "If you want to play in our revolution, you have to play by our rules." This gives its own slant on truth. Retrieved May 2007 from http://washintonmonthly.com/features/2003/0307.confessore.html

[261] The Truth Project is a popular version of Dutch Reformed theology. The political aspirations of the latter are rooted in what is called *sphere sovereignty*, developed by Abraham Kuyper and Herman Dooeyveerd. Its theocratic vision of culture and life has been made more accessible through other reformed writers such as Cornelius Van Til and Francis Shaeffer, the latter of whom I will discuss below. The Truth Project comes by a disturbing colonizing spirit quite honestly, adopting deeply rationalistic tenets. I have no quarrel with "wisdom of the ages," including the wisdom of sacred texts, contributing to conversations in law, politics, economics, history, the arts, education, and so forth. This wisdom is something of a guest,

I want to do four things here. First, I want to situate the whole notion of absolute truth by demonstrating the apparent polysemic nature of truth in a sketch of how truth might be experienced in quest, not merely arrival, in a storied rendering of my current situation. Second, I want to present a brief genealogy of the notion of absolute truth in Western theology. This will focus on a number of significant developments in a long history of how faith is sometimes conflated into various configurations of propositional content. Third, I want to unfold a brief lexicographical summary of the word *truth* from the claimed texts of fundamentalists—Western Judeo-Christian texts—which are the firm foundation of fundamentalist ideology and sometimes equated with absolute truth itself. Fourth, I want to offer what I think is a more hospitable alternative to absolutist portrayals of the truth and postmodern or relational understandings of truth that might be more hospitable to Other who shows up.

A discussion of truth needs to proceed with particular care. On the one hand, "in the absence of truth, power is the only game in town," a kind of license to do whatever one wants even if it involves deception and manipulation.[262] On the other, possessing the truth in Western tradition is a claim to power (Nietzsche) that is equally and profoundly inhospitable, itself subject to possible deception. To possess the truth is to become the Truth against which everything and everyone dashes themselves. It is to obliterate all other games. Pascal notes the prevalence of the latter: "A man's [*sic*] natural sickness is to believe he possesses the truth." Yet again, if all can be reduced to rhetoric, then manipulation and deception would appear to be equally alive and well. Is it possible to "speak truth to power" as an alternative to violence and inhospitality?[263] If so, how? Perhaps a mysterious grace exists in bringing together the lens through which any claim to truth at all is made and how the lens is held; that is, how the claim is accessed. In

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bearing the gift of Presence. As Thomas Merton quotes Jamin Roy in *The Other Side of the Mountain,* "Everyone who comes to my house, brings Loving Presence." A hermeneutic of suspicion engages easily, however, when the claim is made that students will learn how "to apply biblical principles" to all areas of cultural life in a weekend in lectures by popular pundits and priests. See the Focus on the Family website.

[262] Richard John Neuhaus, "The Idea of Moral Progress," in *First Things: A Journal of Religion, Culture, and Public Life*, August/September 1999. Retrieved June 4, 2007, from http://www.firstthings.com/article.php?id_article=3139

[263] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1995).

refusing "to speak beyond our leading"[264]—that is, speaking from within our experience, inviting others to do the same, and sometimes just being quiet—the fusing of these horizons, even in the presence of power grabs, makes time and room for Other. Hospitality's best chance is perhaps within the gift of awareness and stillness.

Storied Truth: Truth as Arrival of Other (Not Quest or Conquest)

As I write this on May 28, 2007, I am looking across a reclaimed gravel pit down the winding Elk River, south of Fernie, British Columbia. I'm wondering, What is the truth of this valley? The cascading kaleidoscope of greens and shapes descending both sides of the valley interrupts and rests my eyes in the brilliant sunshine. Mount Broadwood raises its snowy head 30 kilometers to the south. As I watch a deer quietly grazing a short distance away, a leaf lazily floats from its lofty perch, distracting me from the deer. The deer raises its head and ears, startled by some movement or sound that I don't see or hear. I am not the only one watching, listening, and responding to life here. Nor, obviously, do I see it all. Actually, as I lower my eyes to the dandelions that seem to dominate the yard, the yard is buzzing with bees. I realize that the dandelions are perhaps more like the minions of spring than the bees, even though my eyes are more attracted to movement than color. What else am I missing? I see an infinitesimally small part. What else am I not seeing appropriately as the morning sun unveils the valley before me? How do I hold the holes, the things that don't dominate, the negative space that is also part of the valley? What relationships are absent?

One connection is the river itself. South of Elko, the Elk, which began as droplets of age-old glacial ice above the Elk Lakes, annually replenishes Koocanusa Lake. Koocanusa (Kootenay, Canada, USA) is a 140-kilometer-long lake that backs behind a dam at Libby, Montana, mostly on the Canadian side. The dam was built in the 1950s to control flooding on the lower Kootenay in Washington state and to generate electricity, but mostly to provide irrigation for orchards and huge factory farms on semi-arid land that now produces two and three crops a year in central areas of the state. The dam itself

[264] A Quaker practice.

is under high security watch, with surveillance cameras, rotating symbols of fear, as well as a foreboding premonition of water wars to come.

As I open myself to the presence that is here, now, some say, I have complete control over what I am seeing. As I give permission to what is before me to write on my *tabula rasa* (blank mind)—that is, as I choose to be objective—reality is what reality writes (John Locke). Others argue that I have control over what I see in the sense that what I see, I choose to see. That is, what I see arises from the presumptive categories or a foundational world view that somehow requires me to make sense of what is before me prior to seeing what I see (Immanuel Kant). Others say that what I see is a matter of perspective, not presuppositions, that there is indeed a monolithic entity or single truth before me that I simply see as one perspective. If I then added up all the perspectives, I would have something close to the truth of the valley, even though the meanings of that truth are endless (Nietzsche). Others say that what I'm seeing is more of a linguistic construct, that instead of speaking about *seeing* something, I should be speaking of *seeing it as* something (Wittgenstein). That is, what I am seeing is mere depiction; that ontology is inaccessible.

What if, though, instead of seeing myself as an observer from outside this valley, playing some kind of observational host of what is before me, on some sort of quest, *what if I am guest?* What if in these moments I see myself as being extended hospitality by Life already present (Gadamer)? What if here, there is life prior to my arrival? And life after I leave? The dazzling sunshine, the teeming life that has returned to the valley after winter rest I notice easily in all its beauty and splendor. But the concoction of leaves and mold and snails and worms that ritually replenish the valley floor, with their dirty work that makes splendor possible, are not as obvious. And the forget-me-nots growing in the damp shadows of the forest I don't see unless I'm upon them. Well named. The truths of this valley apparently are not held necessarily by one observer, let alone a neutral one. I am interwoven playfully with what I claim to see. The very question "What is the truth of this valley?" is highly presumptuous at best in this light. Why the need to even ask it? It certainly doesn't cover the material like the contained truth of some theological lectures. If I even have some right or need to ask a question, it should perhaps be more along the

lines of "Why does the truth of this valley begin with such gracious hosting in this moment?" This question is given focus as I realize that I need to travel down the valley and across time or across the world to see it. Monelle, my wife, can see it in a walk across the yard.

There's the story of the forest, its fires, its animals, pestilence, and human interactions, not all of them kind. One grove of massive aspens at Morrissey, within four kilometers of my perch, is estimated to be 500 years old. There are stories of Morrissey itself. In the aptly named *The Forgotten Side of the Border*, Wayne Norton and Ella Verkerk tell a lost story of Canadian inhospitality.[265] It is the story of how after "a two-hour debate" that summed up generations of hatred, miners of British, Belgian, Russian, Italian, and Montenegrin descent combined "to demand that all German and Austrian miners be dismissed immediately from employment by the coal company" mining in the Fernie and Coal Creek area in 1915. In a vivid illustration of Europe's exclusions,[266] the Morrissey Internment Camp (1915-1918) was home to 168 Canadians who became POWs overnight, deemed "enemy aliens" at the insistence of their neighbors. As I think about the Morrissey Internment Camp, now erased by the forest and collective memory, I understand that the meaning of Morrissey is at least partly captured in the marginal notes, in the "negativity of the text," the holes and gaps that surround and penetrate "the beauty" before me (Derrida).

As I think about children and their mothers eating meager fair around tables without fathers and brothers and about an uncertain future without breadwinner, my memory draws me to new and present boundary lands. Gadamer is right: "A past humanity itself becomes present to us in its general relation to the world."[267] Who else lived—and lives—here? Before Europeans even set foot in the valley, it was home to the Ktunaxa (Kutenai), who fished, hunted, and lived here and used the river as a travel corridor to the foothills of the eastern slopes to hunt buffalo and to make war with their mortal enemies of the Blackfoot Confederacy (the Siksikae and Piikani). There's the

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[265] Most of the documents of this in the National Archives have been "misplaced"; the rest are fragmentary. Wayne Norton and Ella Verkerk, *The Forgotten Side of the Border* (Kamloops: Plateau, 1992), p. 92.

[266] Saskia Sassen, *Guests and Aliens* (New York: The New Press, 1999).

[267] Gadamer, p. 390.

story of how time stopped for the Ktunaxa with the arrival first of the fur traders of the Hudson's Bay Company—principally Métis following the steps of the David Thompson. Later, in 1845, Pierre Jean de Smet, a Jesuit priest, would report that he "took spiritual possession of the land,"[268] inseminating the Ktunaxa with sedentary agriculture, European seeds, private property, and, most devastatingly, a permanent chief with autocratic power to settle disputes with European punishment (courts and flogging). Today, after turning a barn at the mission station at Tobacco Plains (near Ft. Steele) into a clubhouse for a 27-hole golf course and, more important, remembering their own community and its healing, including the Medicine Wheel with wisdom, beginning, acceptance, and courage at its heart, the Ktunaxa are beginning to live in hope that time might start again. Beyond what I see here is my own blindness to it; as a Blackfoot student recently reminded me, "White guys can't know our story." The sacrilege of trampling valued traditions that made life a living thing for them as colonizer is not about the past, but the present, making offers of hospitality suspicious at best.

Even as the past draws me to the present, seemingly with open arms to what is, I understand that the grace of this moment is in the truth that unfolds on the boundaries between imagination, memory, historical reality, and current situation. These boundaries that just are invite me to re-vision who I am in relation, to hold together what is before me in space and time, recognizing that what I know is neither separate from me nor finally selected by me, but arrives in emergent variable circumstances and conditions, a deeply interwoven sacred play that plays me (Gadamer).

The limit of my sightlines on this day is not merely the problem of some absolute truth that I might see or even possess objectively. Already I wear glasses. Already the window glass I see through has very slight bends, despite the technological efficiencies of mass manufacturing, which make the ground look wavy at the right angle. Already the window has bird droppings, which my disposition demands I ignore and which are the reason I have to be reminded to wash the windows before company comes. The greater problem is that in seizing some absolute truth about this valley that I seek, such as "It's

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268 Zola Bruneau and C. T. Low, *Highway Three: Lethbridge to Cranbrook, BC* (Lethbridge, AB: Historic Trails Society of Alberta, 1987). Retrieved from http://www.crowsnest -highway.cacgi-bin/citypage.pl?city=KIMBERLEI+page=main&mode+&print=true#2

just a river, so dam it" or "It's just a forest, so strip it down" or "It's my place, so forget all the stories and interdependencies that make it what it is," I lose all sense of the hospitality of this place, that I am a guest. And by momentarily entertaining the question of a singular truth of the valley, I enter the truth, that the very question is not just mine to answer. And I can possibly enter a way of being in relation made so obvious by the monarch butterflies that perch on the windowsill, recharging their wings: Only with sunshine do I live.

Knowing the possibilities of who and what I've missed helps me to live in the hope that resistance to the temptation of placing myself at some absolute, Cartesian entre, is also possible. *Hospitality is resistance.* In being here, now, facing the Otherness of the valley, being present with Them, is a throbbing, unfolding living hope. Knowing river stories of changing channels, that between the mountains and the river, given time, the river wins, reminds me that what I'm seeing today probably has no expiry date, that it is always present. It is so because of the abundance of the valley that was here before I arrived and will endure after my sun has set. And it is so because of my own limitations in its presence, my inability to see very much of anything, but being honored by the Presence I'm in. There is gratitude for the home that it is and a sense of fear for what will be destroyed in the inhospitable conditions that the Cartesian self actually creates. I am, after all, not the only observer here, but a participant in the miracle of life that is everywhere in this moment. It is in this privilege of being played by life of which I'm also privileged to be a part, life that lives relationally, that makes for genuine suspicion of philosophical or theological absolutes beyond relations. It's not just that reality is large and our minds are small (Berry). Rather, it is that the truth of this valley exists in something other than my ability to grasp or understand or conceptualize it at the end of a quest, regardless of mind size. *It is in its hospitality. I am guest.* Rainer Maria Rilke hints at this:

> Catch only what you've thrown yourself, all is
> mere skill and little gain;
> but when you're suddenly the catcher of a ball
> thrown by an eternal partner
> with accurate and measured swing
> towards you, to your center, in an arch

from the great bridgebuilding of God:
why catching then becomes a power—
not yours, a world's.[269]

Genealogies of Absolute Truth

Many of the clues to an experience of estrangement or hospitality in theological studies are found here, I believe, in the interstices between the catcher and the thrower of the ball. The Presence, and even Absence, of Other is in the gift and freedom of *receiving*, of being "the catcher of the ball," already thrown with nothing wasted. Although there is a growing resistance to Enlightenment epistemology among some evangelicals today,[270] there is also a contempt of a reactionary kind hurled at options, a kind of breathing case study of Enlightenment's tendency to take no prisoners. Philosopher Doug Groothuis is among those who strives to shore up faith commitments by depending on theories of truth that actually make faith[271] difficult, if not impossible. In his book *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity against the Challenges of Postmodernism*, he laments the loss of "objective truth or rationality" in contemporary Western culture. "Truth decay is a cultural condition in which the very idea of absolute, objective, and universal truth is considered implausible, held in open contempt, or not even seriously considered."[272] By truth Groothuis means what Nietzsche denies—absolute truth, the dimension of the beginning and end of things. Groothuis lays the blame for the disappearance of such truth squarely on postmodernism, which he paints as very sinister, as "enticing souls" to create their own spirituality, "without a concern for objective truth

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[269] Epigraph to Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2004.

[270] See, for instance, James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006); Carl Raschke, *The Next Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004); Bruce Benson, *Graven Ideologies: Nietzsche, Derrida, and Marion on Modern Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2002); Millard Erikson, *Truth or Consequences: The Promise and Perils of Postmodernism* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2002); Millard Erikson, *Postmodernizing the Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998); et al.

[271] The Greek words *pistis* (n.) and *pisteuo* (v.), in both classical and *koine*, are translated, respectively, as "faith" and "to trust" in English. See Kittel (1965), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. The English word *faith* is derived from the Anglo-Norman *fed*, Latin *fides*, "belief in another's trustworthiness," "fidelity"; and further removed, Indo-European *bheidh*, "to remain true," "to bide or abide," "to dwell expectantly with another."

[272] Doug Groothuis, *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity against the Challenges of Postmodernism* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2000), p. 22

or rationality." For postmodern thinkers, he says, "the very idea of truth has decayed and disintegrated. It is no longer something knowable by anyone who engages in the proper forms of investigation and study. Truth is no longer 'over and above us' (transcendent) as something that can be conveyed across cultures and over time. . . . Truth dissolves into 'a host of disconnected truths.'"[273] Furthermore, he says, postmodernism is the same as nihilism—a fashionable view that emerged in the late 19th century that there is no supreme or enduring truth other than what anyone arbitrarily wills or chooses the truth to be.[274]

How is it that truth ever came to be a thing over and above us? A partial, and ironic, clue is found in Groothuis's arguments against postmodernism: He is making the same arguments that Western philosophers have made against Christianity for generations. Bertrand Russell in 1927 chided believers for being "irrational enthusiasts," silly and stupid people because they do not base their beliefs on argumentation, for reason finds notions of revelation repugnant. The clear alternative to Christianity, Russell projected, was the method of scientific experiment and the rational sifting of data that enables us to "conquer the world by intelligence."[275] Groothuis and Russell, despite having differing beliefs about Christian faith, have essentially the same attitudes to truth and how it is established in Western culture. Ironically for Groothuis, postmodernism is the same ultimate house of cards that collapses in on itself that Russell regarded as the Christian worldview.

At the heart of the Western understanding of truth, including both Groothuis's and Russell's, is the notion that truth is fundamentally correspondence with reality, accessible

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[273] Ibid., p. 20. Of course, this is an ironic claim, given that postmodernism seems to be trying to create a place for persons and their relationships.

[274] Most historians trace nihilism (Latin, *nihil*, "nothing") to Greek notions of indifference (*apatheia*) or indeterminacy (*anepikrita*). Most agree that its contemporary usage arose from Russian writers/ intellectuals who criticized the transcendent visions of Czarist Russia, which created hopeless feudal conditions and reduced life to bureaucratic management in the late 19th century. It is captured in the futility of life, the illusion of freedom, and the inevitability of oppression unfolding in writings such as Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch*, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* among other Russian writers. In these writings it is important to note that nihilism is not hopelessness *per se*, but the hopelessness of attempts to manage life. Nihilism, at least here, can be interpreted as a hope-filled resistance to conditions that create hopelessness.

[275] Bertrand Russell, *Why I am not a Christian, and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957).

only by reason and observation. Historically and etymologically speaking however, this view of truth is not particularly indigenous to Christianity. To be sure, notions of correspondence are a part of all of the Abrahamic traditions (Moslem, Hebrew, and Christian), but only in a relational form of correspondence; that is, in connection with how truthfulness is hospitable to the Other in community and deception is inhospitable. Telling lies destroys relational life. Of course, telling the truth has the same effect potentially, if such telling is not accompanied by love. Speaking the truth in love *is* speaking truth to power, resisting it by providing an already Present alternative. So notions of correspondence are neither the complete story nor, as we will see, the most significant aspect of truth in the Christian story, at least as the latter arrives in the Christian scriptures (New Testament). The appearance of truth as something that stands over and above us and induces us to right and proper forms of study is itself highly situated.

The appearance of absolute truth as the faith's protector at various points throughout Christian history is more reflective of the chameleon-like contours of rationally devised absolute truth than of the nature of faith, which such notions of truth are said to protect. Faith is much more about a sure hope than a sure proposition. Furthermore, faith in its relational reality is gathered up around both what is not seen and what is seen, not just around one or the other,[276] and certainly not around the bias of the modernist theological project towards what is unseen; that is, metaphysics. The faith, for instance, as found in second- and third-century Gnosticism, was made coextensive with a rationalistically devised conflation of salvation and knowledge. As I will probe momentarily, a similar type of mistake was made in 19th-century fundamentalism. The Gnostics believed that faith requires rationality and that there is a kind of religious knowledge that remains superior to faith that can be accessed only by a small group of privileged, enlightened ones, above the masses. The Gnostic understanding inverted the relationship between faith and reason: *Faith needs reason*. By the time of Augustine of Hippo (354-430), this is restored; that is, faith was regarded as the basis of knowledge:

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[276] A Christian text on this is I John 4, where the Johanine author delimits the possibilities of love: "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (vs. 20).

"faith seeking understanding." In Augustine's words, "*Crede, ut intelligas*" ("Believe, in order to understand).

In a similar way, the faith as found in broader configurations of the *corpus Christianum*[277] (lit., "the body of Christian society") in both its Catholic and Protestant forms is a conflation of civil and religious order gathered around uniform hierarchies, uniform worship, and uniform theologies. It was "a system of divine-human management" (Tillich) preserved through threat of persecution, censure, and erasure. Or, in the left wing of the Protestant Reformation, which challenged the Constantinian order with its attempt to recover the *corpus Christi* (lit., "the body of Christ"), the absolutes of papal decree that sought to establish the temporal and spatial uniformities of the medieval world were sometimes replaced by absolutist interpretations of the Sermon on the Mount to fabricate uniform discipleship and were enforced, not by burning, but by banning. The impact of Enlightenment theology is its similar intent to create uniformity on the liberal side by defining what is socially relevant and on the fundamentalist-evangelical side by defining "true truth."[278] Both are rooted in rationalistic supports for the faith, configured along the lines of propositional statements. However, even Tertullian, a church father, vowed that faith that hinges on rational consistency—what Groothuis calls propositional truth—is no faith at all. Whatever foundation there is for faith for Tertullian was absurdity: The infinite Creator morphed as finite creature. For Tertullian, "*Credo quia absurdum* (I believe because it is absurd)." When Kierkegaard picked up this sentiment centuries later, he stressed that it was the gracious paradox of incarnation that summoned the passion of faith. To try to reduce the truth of Christianity to sheer correspondence to facts or to the consistency of reason was both a serious slight to the relational nature of faith and an inhospitable blow to the Other who held it.

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[277] Also called *Constantinianism*. See Paul Peachey (1981), "Constantinian Christendom and the Marx Engels Phenomenon," in *Mennonite Quarterly Review, 55*, p. 184.

[278] This is a constant expression of Francis Shaeffer; that is, synonymous with *absolute truth*, or the truth of propositions that transcend time and culture. It is a popular expression in fundamentalist and some evangelical circles. See Francis A. Shaeffer, *The God Who is There* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1968).

A correspondence theory of truth is also a significant postmodern quibble.[279] The genius of postmodern expressions of faith is largely in the attempt to find an uncharted God language, or, in Luther's words, "to let God be God."[280] That is, there is (as a general rule) no denying that there is such a thing as truth; rather, the postmodern query revolves around how people access the truth and a secondary query/suspicion about how truth claims are regularly used in Christian/Western history to oppress others. The truth that makes for freedom at this point is an illusion. Roland Barthes' goal, for instance, is to unmask hidden power interests, whether political, social, or commercial, hidden in the obvious sign-systems of contemporary consumer culture. By *signs* he means the meaning systems of clothes, furniture, food, news reports, and other messages from seemingly innocent matrices. The objectivity of the sign as an innocent truth-claim about a single state of affairs proves to be illusory. "Postmodernity means, above all, loss of innocence, especially any innocence which perceives the contrived as obvious or natural.[281] More about the postmodern interface with truth momentarily.

Here, briefly, I want to trace out several more specific streams that converged in that curious contemporary notion that the truths of the Christian faith are things "over and

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[279] Although attempting within its own constructs to resist categorization and at risk of oversimplification, postmodern understandings of life and faith are a turning away from the totalizing "essentialism" of modernism in either its rationalistic or its romantic guises. More important, it is a turning to the possibility that regimes of truth can be reread by particular oppressed people as resistance. Different postmodern writers understand this process of construction in different ways. Jacques Derrida understands it as happening through a process of deconstruction, in which the meaning of texts is indefinite depending on the ongoing deferral of meaning (Fr. *Difference*; Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* [Evanston, IL: North Western University Press, 1973], pp. 129-160). Stanley Fish's radical reader response theory advocates for the construction of meaning/truth outside the text in the interpretive community in which one reads. As he explains, "There is no single way of reading, . . . only 'ways of reading' that are extensions of community perspectives" (*Is There a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 16-17) In another place he states, "The reader's response is not *to* the meaning: it *is* the meaning" (ibid., p. 3). Hans-Georg Gadamer reminds us that there are two complementary elements in the construction of meaning, both captured in the notion of *horizon.* Horizon "represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. . . . The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that may be seen from a particular vantage point" (see Gadamer, 2004, p. 269). But, second, we can speak of "the *possible expansion* of horizon, the *opening up of new horizons. . . . Horizons change for a person who is moving"* (ibid., p. 271). Despite their difference, all of them are attempts to give truth an address beyond the abstractions of foundationalism or essentialism. That is, they are attempts to understand truth as relational.

[280] Some argue that this is the center of Luther's theology and anthropology: when God is God, humans can be human. See P.S. Watson, *Let God be God: An Introduction to the Theology of Martin Luther.* (London: Epworth Press, 1954).

[281] Thistelton (1995), p. 15.

above us" and that they can and should be argued out like the timeless, inviolable (i.e., absolute) truths of a mathematical postulate. In other words, how has it happened that, for some forms of Protestantism particularly, theology came to be about finding God at the end of a proposition? I will look here at several conversations that map out the archeologies around this question: Martin Luther, Immanuel Kant, Charles Hodge, and Francis Shaeffer.

Martin Luther had harsh words for the Greek influences he saw in the faith of his day that turned a relationship with God into assent to propositions and transposed faithfulness into certitude and adherence to faith into mental consent. In the Heidelberg Disputation of 1518, he argued that a Christian understanding of truth was best captured in the *theologia crucis* (theology of the cross), against the *theologia gloriae* (theology of glory). The latter, he complained, was philosophical in nature: "That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the hidden things of God as though they are clearly perceptible. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross."[282] Luther was concerned that rationality could easily be misused as an arrogant battering ram, both against people and against God in representing God or the knowledge of God. "Now it is not sufficient for anyone and it does him no good to recognize God in his glory and majesty, unless he recognizes Him in humility and the shame of the cross. Thus God destroys the wisdom of the wise."[283] Luther is protesting the foundationalism or absolutism that seems to require works usually translated as political solutions of the late medieval ecclesial apparatus, the *modus operandi* of Constantinian Christianity. The obsession with dogmatics evoked the classical correspondence of truth to warrant, ground, or justification for works. That is, "if I have the truth, I am justified in providing solutions for your life." This can easily morph into "cure without care,"[284] including just war theory, from which violent solutions of all kinds have been imposed. Luther regarded these works or solutions as an affront to the radical grace of the Gospel: "The love of

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[282] Martin Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation," in *Selected Writings of Martin Luther*, Theodore C. Tappert, Ed. (4 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), Vol. 1, p. 78.

[283] Ibid.

[284] Henry Nouwen, *Out of Solitude* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2004). p. 21.

God does not find or seek its own good, but creates, flowing forth to bestow good. . . . Persons are attractive because they are already loved; they are not loved because they are attractive."[285]

Luther touched off the Reformation of the 16th century by discovering what he called *authentic theological reflection* that began in suffering and grace and led to humility, in protest of the metaphysical disputation that passed as theological reflection, which he believed perpetuated self-glorification. Luther could easily have been a Christian postmodernist at this point with his rants about the Church's preoccupation with grandiose, palatial building projects, elaborate funding schemes that resulted in the commodification of the sacred, and committees and councils to define doctrinal correctness and execute warrants, all at the expense of the Other, desperate for belonging.

Even more significant is that the Reformation itself was a reaction against the modernism of late medieval culture. *Modernism* (from Latin *moderna,* "recently" or "just now") is about the latest trends in rational thought. Modern intellectual history begins with the movement of the late 14th, 15th, and early 16th centuries that called itself the *via moderna.*[286] As historian and theological ethicist Alister McGrath points out, the modernists claimed to be biblical, but what they really meant was that they, like later humanists, rejected the authority of Tradition in Catholicism.[287] The *via moderna* proposed what would today be considered a covenantal interpretation of faith and the Christian scriptures. "God had ordained that he will justify an individual on condition that the individual first fulfils certain demands. These demands were summarized in the Latin *facere quod in se est*; lit., "doing that lies within you" or doing your best. When the individual met this precondition, God was obliged by the terms of the covenant to justify

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[285] Luther, ibid. I: 79-81. In rejecting works as a means of progressing in the spiritual life, Luther was also rejecting the longstanding Thomist anthropology that humans progress from bad to good, from injustice to justice, and so on, through works defined by the church. Rather, he said that humans are a mixture of good and bad always present and that the path of spiritual and moral goodness is found in faith alone in the gift of God.

[286] Carl Rasche, *The Next Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), p. 111. Adherents of the *via moderna* included William of Ockham, Gabriel Biel, and Pierre d'Ailley, all of whom tended to be nominalists who questioned all authoritative interpretations. They also tended to be pragmatists, looking for immediate use of texts and eclipsing, in the very nature of the case, that to which the texts might be pointing. They saw themselves as innovators rather than custodians.

[287] Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 58

him.[288] The approach of the *via moderna* had obvious appeal in late European feudal culture, based as it was on a rule of reciprocal responsibility, even though the reciprocity always favored those in positions of economic and political power. When Luther protested this 'modernist' portrayal of relationality, he did so on the basis of his own rendering of the New Testament—especially Romans—that salvation is not conditioned on the moral or propositional absolutes of scholasticism, especially those designed to gain power over others. Salvation is gift, appropriated, according to Luther, by *sola fide* ("by faith alone"). He was promptly accused of being antinomian; or, in contemporary terms, of being a relativist, a favorite shibboleth leveled by Christians of a variety of stripes against postmodern expressions of the faith. It was suggested that, having no time for good works,[289] Luther's God despised morality. In fact, Luther should be read as trying to create a place for relationality, a basis of positive morality, all the while resisting the repressive moralism of Thomistic canon law.

Among the complex issues in Europe in the first half of the 17th century was the disintegration of the Constantinian/feudal order as maintained in the last vestiges of the Holy Roman Empire, the secularization—lit., "returning to the world" or *saculum* (Latin)—of German lands that had been held by the church, to contending German princes, and the wars over wealth that flowed first to Spain, then to other European countries, stolen from the Amerindian populations of Central and South America.[290] Although the Peace of Westphalia (1648) gave a reprieve to exhausted armies and decimated populations of virtually every European country, the issues that had created the conflicts were nowhere near resolution. The European/Hellenic mind has a difficult time, then as now, conceiving of a world order outside uniformity.

Technology, including the use of gunpowder, created unprecedented devastation. But given the role that religion played, much attention was drawn to the use of religious truth claims as claims to power. In this context Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) attempted to wrest Christianity from these claims, and in the process to reduce it to a moral worldview. The German peasantry had been particularly disadvantaged by the Peace of

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[288] Ibid., p. 76.
[289] Ibid.
[290] On this latter point see Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity*.

Westphalia, and Kant was the son of a Prussian peasant, a harness maker by trade. Without surprise, Kant equated "the truth of the Gospel" with moral law by effectively assimilating the transcendence of God into "transcendental morality." He did this by taking up the mechanism of the age of reason and transforming the Reformation's focus on liberty and personal and communal salvation through faith into a rational certainty of the truths of doctrine, but only those permitted by transcendental morality; that is, morality that is accessible by reason alone. Although Kant believed he was relieving the world of religious tyranny, the result was that the ground of morality was placed in a *something*—that is, transcendental reason—which made Personhood, "the God of Abraham, Isaac," et al., inconsequential. Faith in a personal God was replaced with what Kant called "moral faith," "rational faith," or the "metaphysics of morals." Christianity was corralled within the absolute boundaries of universal reason alone; and rational will, or autonomous choice, becomes the sole source of moral action.[291] An unsavory and violent consequence of the Kantian inheritance is that turning Christianity into a moral vision helped to turn various Western political visions into a pitched battle of moral visions in which the 20th century became the graveyard for millions of people. How can it be that violence and tyranny are so near, when the face of Other is pushed away by something as innocuous as a moral vision?

Grounding faith in universal reason, autonomously configured, does considerable damage to the nature of faith, communally configured, envisioned particularly in the New Testament, which the early Luther as well as the moderate Anabaptists had tried to recapture. Nietzsche noticed this about modernist renderings of theology and declared that rendering faith into sets of moral imperatives and propositions "kills God." Instead of drawing people into the wonder of Other, modern moral rationalism domesticated "Other" to the capacities of human reason, eclipsing faith as a relational trope. The sign of Bethlehem, an intertwined transcendent/immanent Other seeking Others, was illogical and absurd. Nietzsche notes, "Modern men, obtuse to all Christian nomenclature, no longer feel the gruesome superlative that struck a classical taste in the paradoxical

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[291] Benson, pp. 45-46.

formula 'god on the cross.' Never yet and nowhere has there been an equal boldness in inversion: it promised a re-evaluation of the values of antiquity."[292]

Nietzsche had no particular sympathies for Christianity, sure as he was that it was Greek metaphysics in disguise—"Platonism for the people" he called it. His assessment though of what happened to Christianity under Greek and Enlightenment influence is telling. A Christian moral view of the world identified with modernism, he thought, is really Greek metaphysics. Nihilism's moment is in Hellenic dualism, the distinction between real and ideal, *this* and *other* world, being and becoming, time and eternity, physical and metaphysical. The collapsing of the ideal world into the world of ideas, such as when *the idea of the Good* becomes the supreme reality, is the consummation of world denial, "a giving up on the world."[293] Under the reign of dualism, furthermore, the world is divided up into what is true (things to which reason could be applied) and the illusory or apparent, with the consequence that the suffering Other is simply suffocated. Why? At the heart of modernism, sometimes called *the modernist manifesto*, the self is made the adjudicator of truth, "the law of your own (autonomous) will."[294] A new dualism, that of self-Other, is created, and the latter is trumped by the former. In postmodern understanding this is the Trojan horse inside modernism's gates.

Although Kant sincerely believed that he was creating space for faith by creating a foundation in reason, he was actually serving faith with a kind of eviction notice, at least to the extent that faith was becoming a self-enclosed moral reflection or "analysis of values," disconnected from the social world "to date,"[295] where the Other is not on the horizon. This was Nietzsche's definition of nihilism: "What does nihilism mean? That the highest values devaluate themselves." Furthermore, "this realization is a consequence of the cultivation of "truthfulness"—thus itself a consequence of faith in morality."[296] The

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[292] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to Philosophy of the Future*, Walter Kaufmann, Trans. (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 60. As cited in Rasche, p. 45.

[293] Marva J. Dawn, *Unfettered Hope: A Call to Faithful Living in an Affluent Society* (Louisville, KT: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003). Dawn, a Lutheran theologian, says that truth "is not a What but a Who (and a very counterideological, unpowerful one at that)" (p. 83).

[294] Benson, p. 44.

[295] MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study of Moral Theory* (2nd ed.; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 257-258. MacIntyre's argument is that understanding virtue must begin with a *telos* or a moral good to life, an Aristotelian notion. Otherwise, moral theorizing becomes solipsistic.

[296] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 6.

ancient practice of relationality had been hollowed out, reducing revelation to reason and faith to a value or idea without a relational horizon.[297]

A direct linkage to contemporary notions of absolute truth in Christian fundamentalism is found in an innovation of the old Princeton theologians; in particular, Archibald Alexander (1772-1851) and Charles Hodge (1797-1878). The latter is regarded as the forefather of Christian fundamentalism in the United States. Hodge had "a radical 'atemporal' understanding of knowledge, drawn directly from the common sense realism of the Scottish Enlightenment," especially that of Thomas Reid.[298] Hodge regarded the study of theology as the collection and assembly of biblical 'facts,' a theologian as a kind of higher-order scientist. Theology and science are equivalent because the external world, like God himself, is revealed as exactly what it is. For Reid the external world was accessible by the normal human mind, *common sense*. For Hodge the truth of the Bible is accessed by the *regenerated human mind*.[299] Hodge's approach radically changed the place of biblical texts by making an epistemological claim for them. Through most of the rest of Christian history, including Augustine, Clement of Alexandria, Calvin, and Luther, the sacred texts have been regarded as *soteriological truth*, as having to do with providential hospitality extended to humankind.[300] With Hodge a new epistemological claim is made: Everything that "a sacred writer asserts is true, is true."[301] This conflation of salvation and knowledge, where knowledge is superior to faith, accessed by the privileged few, is a kind of Gnosticism in its own right.

Hermeneutically, things changed as well. In Christian history there had always been a participation in the text assumed and defended. Luther, for instance, argued passionately for the embrace of the faith of Christ as the living Presence of the text. For

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[297] This delimiting of the limits of knowledge and time underwrites Western consumer culture in which the individual "consumer is god" and the only limits on consumption are defined by autonomous choice, without relational referents of any kind. Hence the conversation between college roommates about consumption, which begins and ends with "You can't—nobody can—tell me how to spend my money!"

[298] John W. Stewart and James H. Moorehead, *Charles Hodge Revisited: A Critical Reappraisal of His Life and Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), p. 58.

[299] Raschke, ibid. See also pp. 127-128.

[300] A 'sign' of this is in Revelation 3: "I am at the door knocking. If anyone opens the door, I will come in and we'll dine together."

[301] Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1 (London: James Clarke, 1960), p. 163. As cited in Raschke, p. 123.

Hodge, suddenly the text had something to prove. Among the moderate Radical Reformers (Menno Simons, Felix Manz, Michael Sattler, et al.), there was insistence not only in response, but also in daily ethical response of followers of the Way: Following meant following daily in life in community. In other words, the left wing of the Reformation defined a follower of Christ by focal practices, not primarily by propositions.[302] With Hodge, as the interpolator of common sense into the text, the meaning of the text was flattened to its facticity; that is, to the historical or doctrinal propositions to which it referred, with no consideration of human receptivity or response, let alone the contours of personality and mystery that are actually the host of the text. The *truth of Christianity* now became *truths of plain evidence*, third-person theological statements and sentences. *They* became an *It.* If belief in God stems from rationally defined propositions about God, how is face-to-face encounter possible? How can the face of Other be embraced when reason is sovereign?

Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984) was a kind of prophet of cultural engagement among a whole generation of so-called rebellious, though often theologically sophisticated Western youth in the mid 20th century. In 1955 he and his wife, Edith, established a community called *L'Abri* (Fr. "The Shelter") in Huemoz, Switzerland, to engage young people who were despairing and confused about modernist renderings of both life and faith. By 1960 *Time Magazine* had taken notice of Shaeffer's work, and his influence spread to North America, where it continues in some evangelical as well as fundamentalist circles. In the late 1970s Schaeffer worked with Everett Koop, who was Surgeon General to U.S. President Reagan, to develop the film *Whatever Happened to*

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[302] Nietzsche would later agree with this: "Only Christian practice, a life such as he who dies on the Cross *lived,* is Christian." Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Antichrist* (with *Twilight of the Idols*), R. J. Hollingdale, Trans. (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1968), p. 39. As cited in Benson, p. 96. This is a weakness of some modern theological critiques of modernism. Modernity is not just a defunct rationalism (Raschke) or just an idolatrous ontotheology (Benson), but a horrific political machine that continues to propagate triumphalism that inflicts great violence on the world. As Jurgen Moltmann points out, the Anabaptist recovery of the radical, everyday, around-the-table politics of following one particular Jesus daily offers a further crucial element to resist the evils of modernity. He says that the future of the Reformation "does not lie on the right wing with its Catholic tendencies, but on the left wing. . . . After the reformation of faith and teaching, they [the Anabaptists] wanted the reformation of life through love, . . . the gathering of the congregation" (Jurgen Moltmann, *The Open Church: An Invitation to a Messianic Lifestyle* [London: SCM Press, 1978], p. 117). I think perhaps that Raschke doesn't see this because he is overly focused on the subjectivist tendency of Anabaptist thought, a quite minor one at that.

the Human Race? which was advertised as a discussion of the role of secular humanism in diminishing human dignity. The hinge issue of the film was abortion—to Koop, infanticide. For the American Christian right, abortion has remained a sign and symbol of the loss of moral absolutes in American culture. As noted above, the Republican Party subsequently adopted abortion as a hinge issue to secure the support of the Christian right in George W. Bush's ascendency in 2000 and, similarly, in 2004.

Schaeffer was convinced that the concept of truth was what was at issue in what he saw as a loss of human dignity in the 20th century. The great chasm between the generations, he observed, "has been brought about almost entirely by a change in the concept of truth. . . . On every side you can feel the stranglehold of this new methodology—and by methodology we mean the way we approach truth and knowing."[303] Schaeffer, a philosophical presuppositionalist in the Kantian sense (some things are held prior to knowledge), argued that it is the disappearance of certain presuppositions that is the root of "despair" or "the loss of meaning" in contemporary culture. He says:

> If you had lived in . . . the United States before about 1935, you would not have had to spend much time, in practice, in thinking about your presuppositions. . . . What were those presuppositions? The basic one was that there really are such things as absolutes. They accepted the possibility of an absolute in the area of Being (or knowledge), and in the area of morals. Therefore because they accepted the possibility of absolutes, though there might be disagreement as to what these were, nevertheless they could reason together. . . . So if anything was true, the opposite was false. In morality, if one thing was right, its opposite was wrong.[304]

Shaeffer traced the change in the understanding of truth to Hegel. Whereas prior to Hegel one could be sure of the stable ground on which one stood, afterward, one could not. In dialectical conceptions of history, the world is not seen in terms of the true and false, but rather thesis, a resistant antithesis, and an emergent synthesis. In the loss of "true truth," as Shaeffer later called it, Hegel created a "line of despair." The first person to cross the line, in Schaeffer's view, was Kierkegaard, who in his notion of a "leap of

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[303] Francis Shaeffer, *The God Who is There* (Chicago: Intervarsity Press, 1968), pp. 13-14.
[304] Ibid., p. 14.

faith" made faith superior to truth or "knowledge.[305] The only way to remain above the line of despair, to maintain meaning, in Schaeffer's view, was to hold a faith based on reasonable consistency within the propositional content of a worldview. For Schaeffer, at the end of the day, Christian presuppositions were the most consistent, and non-Christian ones eventually ended in absurdity, contradiction, and, of course, despair. "True truth" would always win the day.

How the relational implications of Schaeffer's thinking about true truth get worked out in his political theory and in political life in North America to the present time are quite germane to a discussion on truth and hospitality. To Schaeffer, all of Western political life and culture was based on the paradox of Christian liberty found in the Reformation: The Christian is totally free and subject to no one except infinite God; simultaneously, the Christian is subject to the rules of civil society, which express absolute human equality ordained by a sovereign God. "Democracy, freedom without chaos, as it is known in northern Europe, was built on the Reformation, and it has not existed anywhere else, and this includes the small city-states in Greece long ago. . . . When one removes the Bible, in which God has spoken propositionally, and the resulting Christian consensus, freedom without chaos will not long remain. It can't. Something will take its place, and it will be one of the elites."[306]

Was Schaeffer's critique of the loss of absolutes in Western culture part of his own compulsion to restore Protestant Christianity as the preferred, elite worldview of the West? Given his optimistic reading of Protestant history, as well as his optimism that the modern world would accept his epistemological presuppositionalism, one would think so.

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[305] Actually, Kierkegaard never coined the phrase *leap of faith*, so prevalent in modernist interpretations of him, like Schaeffer's. Rather, he talked about a leap *to* faith. The difference in my reading of Kierkegaard is the difference between a *suspension* of reason as caricatured by modernist interpretations and the *abandonment* of reason, which is what Kierkegaard was trying to suggest. The fundamental quality of Abraham's faith, Kierkegaard's hero of faith, both when Abraham is asked to leave home and family to become the father of nations, as well as when he is asked to sacrifice his son Isaac, is in Abraham's abandonment of reason as the rule by which the world works and embrace of the strange voice of Other, who knows better than he. *Leaping to faith* to Kierkegaard is not about leaving reason for a while and obeying the Other when asked or convenient; rather, it is about believing, expecting, and welcoming the paradox (so foreign to Enlightenment) that Other arrives outside of reason's rule.

[306] Francis Schaeffer, *Back to Freedom and Dignity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), p. 103. This is also the focus of *How Then Shall We Live?* in which he paints the specter of "totalitarianisms of the right or left" who are emerging to answer "despair."

If the Reformation had indeed spawned modernism, it might indeed be time for Protestants to reclaim their intellectual inheritance, out of which secular humanism had somehow skillfully defrauded them. Schaeffer's cultural triumphalism was itself something of a glaring false intimacy with Luther, who, as noted above, understood the cross as central to Christian thought and life. To what extent Shaeffer's thought played into a surging Christian "reconstructionism" or "dominion theology"[307] of the present day is open to debate. However, the parallel lines of thinking about absolute truth and how it gets worked out politically are quite clear, despite Shaeffer's disavowal of any connection with reconstruction. Both believed that all areas of life must be reconstructed, given the presupposition that human life was fallen, dominated by sin.

To be fair, Schaeffer used reason as common ground with anyone interested in conversing with him, something unheard of in reconstructionism, which considers reason of the natural man as depraved. On the other hand, there is little question that the trajectory of Schaeffer's own life, moving from the epistemological issues around true truth to political theory to political action, served to concretize Christian triumphalism in a dangerous new shape. Instead of responsible participation in the civil order, reconstructionism wants to take it over and seeks to do so in what became known as the moral majority.

Taking over is the very clear agenda of R. J. Rushdoony, founder of reconstructionism, and like Shaeffer, a student of Cornelius Van Til. In 1973 Rushdoony wrote *Institutes of Biblical Law*, in which he advocated a return to the ideals of Calvin's Geneva, which was based on the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament, as a serious political and legal agenda in American lawmaking. He regarded these laws as absolute and proposed them as the *dominion of sovereign God*, an alternative to the dominion of secular humanism. Rushdoony's "theonomy" (Greek, *theos*, "God," and *nomos*, "law"; hence, "God's law") includes the concept that "God's revealed standing laws are a reflection of His immutable moral character and, as such, are absolute in the sense of

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[307] These are terms used to define Cornelius Van Til's theology. Schaeffer was a student of Van Til at Westminster Seminary, which was established in 1929 by Van Til and several other Princeton faculty who were disenchanted with the theological liberalism of their day. The avowed purpose of Westminster was to "educate specialists in the Bible."

being nonarbitrary, objective, universal, and established in advance of particular circumstances, thus universally applicable to general types of moral situations."[308] It is not surprising that Rushdoony was among the first advocates of Christian homeschooling as a protest to secular public education in the 1970s. Rushdoony's son-in-law, Gary North, is head of The Institute of Christian Economics in Tyler, Texas, an ultra right-wing economic think tank.[309]

Armed with the Bible, understood as the absolute truth of propositions about God and moral dictates of human life, and emptied of relational horizons that are found in local and contingent personhood, tendencies to reconstructionism continue to surface in American fundamentalism, as in, for example, The Truth Project. "The Bible says" can be a gloss for a modernist text in which absolute truth is the truth of propositions or moral postulates, rationally discerned, turning the Scriptures themselves into texts of violence. We turn then to the text that Christian fundamentalists say underwrites their claims about truth, to further raise suspicion around notions of absolute truth, especially as the latter is offered up within fundamentalism as a reflection of impersonal immutability.

Lexicographical Considerations

Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) famously defined a *lexicographer* as "a writer of dictionaries, a harmless drudge that busies himself in tracing the original and detailing the signification of words."[310] Busying oneself with hermeneutical deciphering of the word *truth* is, I think, anything but harmless, especially when there is, to some, everything riding on it, which needs defending at all costs. On the other hand, as a student recently said in a class discussion, "I think all these qualifiers around the word truth [*true, absolute, relative*, etc.] are dumb because all we ever do is fight about them." I think her theological instincts were right simply because interpreting

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[308] Greg Bahnsen, *By This Standard*, pp. 345-347. Retrieved August 13, 2007, from http://www.religious.org/resonstr.htm

[309] North is a prolific writer, among other things, who has developed books and curricular materials for junior and senior high home schooling. He attacks all forms of socialism, especially the more moderate theories of John Maynard Keynes. He pushes the usual neoliberal agenda of low taxation, free market capitalism, and nongovernment intervention. His own 'triumphalism' seems to arise from a preference for the Old Testament.

[310] *Lexicography* in *Answers.com*. Retrieved July 14, 2007, from http://www.answers.com/topic/lexicography

the word truth in Hebrew and Christian texts is not really about reducing it to one more proposition to shore up what requires defending, but, as we will see, much more about opening up a world of relational stories, most of them very particular, interfacing with Other, freedom, love, and awe, not knowledge.

Considering the word *truth* (Hebrew, *emat;* Greek, *aletheia* or *alethes*) lexicographically reveals the irony that the very texts that supposedly point to truth as a fixed, impersonal, unchanging, never-alterable notion—that is, as *absolute*—do not speak of truth in this sense. The lexicographical issue is made more complex simply because words mean something not only in what they meant, but also in what they have come to mean. This is all the more important when words are used as glosses for power assertions as I have come to understand that *absolute truth* is in at least some fundamentalist circles.

For many years the theological understanding of the word truth was shaped by a kind of naïve dualism between a Greek conception of truth as one that broadly matches *coherence* (two things cannot both be true and false at the same time) and a Hebrew concept that broadly matches *contingency, performance, or faithfulness between persons*. The view, first made popular by Rudolf Bultmann, suggested that the biblical writers (Hebrew and Christian) reflect primarily the Hebrew concept. The argument depends on the assumption that for all Greek usage, truth is timeless, raised above both place and time, a metaphysical *it* that relates primarily to extrahistorical being and/or a world of ideas.[311] This was the thinking of Plato, who regularly contrasted *changeless truth* with *changing appearances* (Greek, *phantasma*; lit., "fantasy"), but there were other views in Greek usage. The Sophists, for instance, refused to regard the material world as illusion. The Sophist Protagorus understood that "humankind is the measure" and that the experience of a warm wind on the part of one person, which might be cool to another, doesn't constitute matters of truth or falsehood.[312]

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[311] Rudolf Bultmann, "*alatheia*," "*alethes*," in G. Kittel, Ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), pp. 238ff. See also Kittel's contribution on Old Testament usage, pp. 232ff.

[312] Anthony Thistleton, "Does Lexicographical Research Yield 'Hebrew' and 'Greek' Concepts of Truth?" As cited in Colin Brown, Ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 3 (Exeter, UK: Paternoster Press, 1978), pp. 874-902. See also an updated version of this article with a section on "How Does This Research Relate to Notions of Truth Today?" in Anthony B. Thistleton,

For Aristotle, truth was about propositional statements. Here the truth of a proposition is absolute in the sense that it is internally consistent, noncontradictory ("If Socrates is well, it cannot be said that Socrates is ill") and corresponds to the facts. In contrast to these Greek notions, Bultmann maintained, the biblical writers followed the Hebrew understanding of truth as *faithfulness with or to persons.*[313] The distinction projected between Greek and Hebrew concepts was itself reflective of a Kantian dualism between truths of fact and truths of value.[314] The former is a matter of objective use; the latter is only of personal, subjective, or confessional use. This dualism has now largely been dislodged.[315]

Notions of truth in the ancient literature of Christians and Jews are far more many-sided, complex, and reverential than the reductionism of fundamentalist practice. In a word, truth does not unfold in a singular, monolithic frame; it is polymorphous (has many forms and shapes) and polysemic (has different meanings).

In most cases the word truth in the Old Testament (the closest word is *emet*, derived from *mn*; lit., "to be firm") is never a mere abstract or theoretical concept; *persons* are regularly involved. So it is used as personal support or carrying, "as a nurse carrying a child."[316] Certainly it is never located, as in Plato, in some timeless, extra-historical realm.[317] It is most often tied to notions of promises made and promises in process of being kept; that is, to covenant (*b'rit*). So the notion of mutual binding or

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Collected Essays (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), pp. 267-285. Thistleton points out that Protagorus comes close to notions of existential truth, and to some postmodern ones as well.

[313] Bultmann, ibid.

[314] Leslie Newbiggin, a historian and cultural anthropologist, regards this dualism as the current value of contemporary pluralism. He argues that when only public truth (so-called facts) have public value in the nature of the case, private truth (beliefs and confessions out of which people regularly also try to live) is given short shrift, even though it is always present. See *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989).

[315] Thistleton (2006), p. 268.

[316] Numbers 11:12.

[317] It needs to be noted here as well that a postmodern reading of Plato, founded on the quest for knowledge of eternal forms, discovered another principle, the key to deconstruction; namely, the principle of *khora*; lit., "the space of the negative." *Khora* serves as a counterbalance to overconfidence in metaphysics, where *being* is only by virtue of being's constraining absence. There is a significant relationality here between what is and what is not. So from a postmodern perspective, Platonism itself is a little fluid and not at all found in the conceptual 'cement blocks' that modernist interpretations make it out to be. Contemporary physics, including chaos theory, of the last couple of decades has even troubled *substantiality* as a metaphor for nature. The universe is full of "holes"—white holes, black holes—the Platonic *khora.*

reliability is an integral part of Hebrew thinking about covenant. If this were all that was involved in the sense of the word, we might end up with a simple case for the older (Bultmann's) view that truth in the Hebrew and Christian tradition is about faithfulness. However, it is significant that as the Hebrew word *emet* was translated into *koine* (common) Greek of the third to first centuries BCE, it unfolds as either *aletheia* (truth) or *pistis* (faith or faithfulness). Whereas some argue that this points again to the notion of faithfulness at the root of the Hebrew notion of truth, the better explanation, as Thistelton[318] spelled it out in detail, is that this is one of many examples of polysemy in Hebrew. Hence it can mean several things: truth, faith, faithfulness; or in contrast to deceit, lying, or concealment; or in certain instances integrity, as in congruence between action and word or voice and touch, depending on the context. The notion of truth as integrity is regularly used when *emet* occurs in combination with *hesed* (unfailing love or the love of fulfilled promise).[319] In other places truth stands in contrast to deceit or falsehood.[320] In several places in the Psalms, truth stands in contrast to concealment, in the same sense as many of its Greek nuances. So the Psalmist prays for truth in the inward parts; that is, not for loyalty, but for liberation from shadiness and self-deception. Finally, in the prophets, the now-ness and the here-ness of *emet* is behind the prophetic call for Yahwists of character to rebuild trust in the land by not deceiving people. Hence the people are to "speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgements that are true; . . . love no false oath."[321] Clearly, although there are connections between truth and faithfulness, the word *emet* cannot be collapsed into a single, monosemic meaning and has persistent and significant relational undertones. This multivocal dynamism is perhaps what one would expect in a story of relations between persons in specific political, economic, social, and environmental contexts—a story that also preserves it from abstraction.

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[318] Thistleton (2006), pp. 270-275.

[319] Genesis 24:49, Psalm 25:10.

[320] Genesis 42:16, where Joseph wishes to establish whether his brothers have "told the truth"; or Exodus 18:21, where Moses selects "men of truth whose word cannot be bought"; or Deuteronomy 13:14, where reports of idolatry are to be checked for "truthfulness" or "veracity"; that is, whether the charge can be substantiated. This latter usage occurs throughout the Wisdom literature, which considers *truth* the opposite of *deception*.

[321] Zechariah 8:16-17.

There is in the New Testament a similar polysemic pattern in the use of the word *aletheia* (truth) and *alethes* (true).[322] It is interesting that the words come from the lips of Jesus only four times in the Synoptics, though with considerable frequency in the Johanine gospel. The synoptic writers' portrayal of Jesus' attitude about truth is very lively, concerned with both the disintegration of personhood and relationships implicit in hypocrisy—the failure to match voice with touch. "The Pharisees . . . preach but do not practice . . . tithing, . . . but neglecting weightier matters (like mercy and compassion)."[323] His concern is portrayed as having to do precisely with the everyday social destruction of legal abstractions that served little other than human pride in bureaucratic control of religious expression. So he said, "Woe to you lawyers, for you load down people with burdens hard to bear, and you don't lift a finger to help!"[324] Put positively, Jesus' approach to truth is portrayed as something to be entered into, not merely talked about. So even as there is a proclamation that the outcast, the foreigner, the estranged are already *gift*, he eats with them, the despised of his culture.[325] His words have currency (truth) precisely because his actions gave them "the ring of truth."[326] His matching of voice to touch gave his teaching authority or authenticity (*authentos*; lit., "true to the original voice").[327]

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[322] For New Testament references I have relied on Paul R. McReynolds' *Word Study: Greek-English New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1999). (This is based on the same text as Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo Martini, Bruce Metzger, and Allen Wikgren's *Novum Testamentum Graeco*, United Bible Societies, 26th ed.)

[323] Matthew 23:2, 3, 23, 24,

[324] Luke 11:46.

[325] Jesus eating with "sinners" becomes a moment of considerable tension with the rulers of ancient Israel. His hospitality was resistance to the social order. See especially N. T. Wright, "The Reasons for Jesus' Crucifixion," in Brad Jersak and Michael Hardin, Eds., *Stricken by God? Nonviolent Identification and the Victory of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2007), pp. 78-149. Marcus Borg, "Executed by Rome, Vindicated by God." In B. Jersak and M. Hardin, pp. 150-165

[326] This was coined by J. B. Phillips when he tells the story of his work in translating the New Testament. See J. B. Phillips, *Ring of Truth*, (New York: McMillan Press, 1967).

[327] "He taught them not as the scribes, but as one having authenticity" (Matthew 7:29). The scribes relied on the accretions of interpretations that had all been handed down in the Mishnah and other writings, but it rang hollow. There was no voice of their own. Their truth belonged to someone else ("Rabbi X said that Rabbi Y said, etc."), and Jesus' truth was his own. In the same way Jesus protested the root of inauthenticity, which was essentially in reading texts as if they contained life, when texts actually point to life and liveliness beyond themselves. Jesus and Gadamer would have agreed on this point: You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, . . . but you refuse to enter the authentic relationships into which the text is inviting you (my translation of John 5:39-40). This passage is

Jesus is known to open up worlds of concealment of both power and deception, as well as grace and truth, which the writer of the fourth Gospel, John, identifies with "his glory" or his presence in suffering.[328] This is not something that people hear or learn or memorize, such as one might hear or learn propositions or information. Rather, it is something that unfolds in personal Presence, so that He who *is* the truth invites gaze, as in "We *beheld* His glory (becoming flesh), full of grace and truth." In John the truth is also to be *done*, and in the doing, light dawns.[329]

Paul's use of "the truth of the Gospel," especially in Galatians,[330] signals an offer of friendship and embrace. Here *aletheia* is held in contrast to the destruction of relationships with the Other that occur when faith is collapsed into reductionistic notions of legal requirements that become abstractions that serve pride and exclude the Other. In another place Paul speaks of the possibility of abandoning "the truth and wandering into myths" —again abstractions that distance and even foreclose hospitable embrace when "fighting" and "wrangling" break out.[331] In other places Paul uses the term *aletheia* in contrast to lying and falsehood and, as in the prophetic use, ties truth to positive social dimensions of life, perhaps best summarized in the phrase "speaking the truth in love."[332] Paul's use of the word truth is *unconcealment* (the so-called Greek view), but with a relational twist, in contrast to the synoptic Jesus' use, which centers on integrity and authenticity, in contrast to John's, which is again centered on "watching the truth unfold in personal demonstration or *doing*." Again, New Testament interpretations of truth always seem to arrive with actual, contingent, personal, relational undertones, sometimes made explicit. For instance, Jesus' refusal to answer Pilot's question "What is truth?" can

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particularly germane to the highly selective fundamentalist hermeneutic that conceals power, instead of the invitation to hospitable living.

[328] John 1:14. See Thistelton, p. 281. Schnackenburg comments that *truth* here in John has to do with a certain earthiness of encounter with God. In Jesus, "divine reality in a strongly ontological sense" is found, with God "pitching his tent, making his home" on earth. This also has profound implications for Christian notions of hospitality that are so foreign to some Christian fundamentalism. See R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John,* I (London: Burns and Oates, 1968), p. 273. As cited in Thistelton, ibid.

[329] John 3:21: "He that does the truth, comes to the light."

[330] See also I Timothy 2:4 and II Timothy 3:7.

[331] II Timothy 4:3-4.

[332] Ephesians 4:15. See also Ephesians 4:25: "Therefore, putting away deceit, let each one speak truth/truthfully to their neighbor, for we are members of one another."

be seen as resistance to questions designed to trap or humiliate another. Even when it is made explicit, such as in the "*Logos* (Greek, 'Word') becoming *sarx* (Greek, 'flesh,' *lit.*, "all it means to be human") and pitching a tent in/among us,"[333] there is considerable mystery, such that we can only "behold" or "gaze upon" as a "glory, full of grace and truth." The relational dynamism of *aletheia* being Person ("I am the . . . truth") is an invitation to a new way of being in relation.

The possibilities of relational being in this particular world is made all the more lively in the presence of dynamic, polysemic meanings of the word truth. Unlike much of the rhetoric around absolute truth, particularly in fundamentalist circles, there is nothing impersonal or unconnected to who-I-am-in-relation in the primary texts of Jews and Christians. The lived story of a particular Jew, born in Bethlehem, the Other *Logos*, resists immutability[334] and other rationalist presumptions, that place Other beyond the pale of embrace. *Truth is beside us already.* There is nothing to be secured or defended here. There is indeed correspondence between promises made and promises kept, but even the truth of promises "never freeze[s] the question" of the gracious unfolding of life. They are "on their way."[335] The very notion that Truth as person needs qualifiers such as *absolute* is not just a trivialization of the rich and gracious polysemic contours so inscribed in personhood, but to that extent a site of deep violence. I can know only part of Other's story, a story that refuses to have a last word, so that kindness and openness to the Stranger is a never-ending story because my ignorance is vast. But so is the invitation to awe, to behold Other-in-relation, in the space where Other *is* truth.

Propositional Truth and 'Post' Possibilities for Hospitality

In the heady days of Enlightenment and its aftermath, the absolute truth of propositions (Latin, *proposition*; lit., "to set out in words"), of either the theological or

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[333] John 1:14. Bultmann (in Kittel) makes the very important point that John's use of the word *Logos* to apply to *Person* is an intentional redefining of classical Greek notions of logos as "the defining principle of the universe."

[334] The notion of *immutability* in Western theological tradition is the notion that God is changeless, unalterable, unbending. It is the source of much debate that arises largely on suspect equations between "God" and "absolute truth." When these are conflated, the result is abstract, speculative theological discourse, which contributes much to obliterating Other who is already Present. As a student recently observed, "This just turns God into a stuffed shirt to scare us, . . . kind of like a scarecrow!"

[335] John Macquarrie, "Truth in Theology," in *Thinking about God* (London: SCM, 1975), p. 25.

moral variety, became for many a kind of sure foundation of faith. As I have attempted to describe above, primary Christian and Hebrew texts' portrayal of truth is actively resistant to these dominant fundamentalist notions. However, they remain. Here I want to explore their persistence as a source of relational disintegration in theological study. Investments in absolute truth, with their assumption of an independent *something*, objectively discerned, *against which* one succumbs or dies, has much to do with "feeling far from God." I want to explore this in two interrelated protests in theological reflection, one having to do with postmodern configurations of faith and the other having to do with how responding to texts relates to the life of faith, which might serve a pedagogy of hospitality. I understand these protests to be both a hopeful resistance to the annihilations of rationalism and a hopeful proposal for hospitable embrace of Other, all the while being considerably more faithful to the unveiling of relational truth in primary Christian and Hebrew texts than Enlightenment renderings ever have been.

Post Possibilities and Faith

The English word *truth* and the word for marriage, *troth* or *betrothal*, have common etymological links. Truth lies in the sanctity of the relationship, in the marriage of believers with One believing. The koine, *aletheia*, is an "unveiling." *Truth is the intimacy of the interpersonal.* Again, when Jesus says "I am the truth," he is not making some sort of mathematical or logical equation about himself, as the passage is so often read.[336] Turning the statement into a totalizing proposition, as the center piece in a tabloid of impersonal facts, is to annihilate Other.[337] Nothing about the Stranger is impersonal. If truth were an impersonal proposition, it is easy to imagine that Jesus might rather have chosen to write books than to walk with people, *as Truth*. He is not making a claim about what He is in some sort of ontological sense; rather, he is unveiling himself as Outsider, Other, the Unknown Person, through whom Presence is extended, the Presence of a

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[336] A few months ago a popular fundamentalist preacher said, "Just like 2+2=4, Jesus equals the truth." This is a testimony to modernist reduction of truth to consistency (rationalism) and coherence (empiricism), not to the portrayals of truth in the New Testament.

[337] This was Nietzsche's protest when he said that truth is a woman. He meant that the notion of truth as intimacy was foreign to Enlightenment 'mining' of the world for propositions.

journey together, not merely an arrival in my own head, stated as a conclusive proposition.

Nietzsche's dictum "God is dead!" is quite understandable in this context. As I commented above, most interpreters of Nietzsche observe that the phrase "God is dead" does not mean that rationality has evaporated. Nietzsche's madman brashly declares that God has "died" because "we have killed Him." The "we" is the modernist first-person plural, standing over and against Other with rationalistic, coherent propositions. It is modern philosophy and theology that has "murdered God." Atheism and nihilism, according to Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, are not the consequence of unbelief; they are the hidden curriculum of much religious belief implicated in Hellenic abstractions. Heidegger says, "The pronouncement "God is dead" means: The suprasensory world is without effective power. It bestows no life. Metaphysics, i.e., for Nietzsche Western philosophy understood as Platonism, is at an end. Nietzsche understands his own philosophy as the countermovement to metaphysics, and that means for him a movement in opposition to Platonism."[338] Atheism and nihilism (the devaluation of life through standing over it or against it to subdue and overcome it rather than living it) are the secret heart of modernist religion.[339] As Benson points out, attempts to honor God with particular propositions of God, such as "God is sovereign" or "God is highest being," are most enticing and deceptive because they *seem* like ways to honor God. They are, however, just further examples of substituting an *it* for *person,* a human *logos* for the divine. As a student recently commented, "It's like I wish God would just undo one button on His shirt and just be who He is!" That is neither the students nor Other's problem, however. It is the problem of imposing rationalism onto theological pedagogies. Nietzsche's critique of Christianity is that unbridled reason in modernist theology is an idol of human design and making and that the inversion that "god on a cross" offered the

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[338] Martin Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche: God is Dead," in *The Question Concerning Technology*, William Lovett, Trans. (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 61. As cited in Bruce Ellis Benson, *Graven Ideologies: Nietzsche, Derrida and Marion on Modern Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2002), p. 88.

[339] Heidegger, p. 105. As cited in Benson, p. 93.

ancient world was that he "took it all off."[340] Echoing Nietzsche's complaint, living in the presence of Other appropriate to who Other is, begins in renouncing the creations of reason, especially when sovereignty is claimed for a totalizing, absolute "It."[341] There is no Presence here. As Raschke contends, "Modernism and atheism are not accidental bedfellows."[342] Indeed, if faith is merely a first principle of reason, then reason alone is adequate. And if faith cannot know Other except by reason, then reason does not require Other.

The transformation of the faith under the spell of Enlightenment rationalism made faith unnecessary, or at least truncated or inadequate, something which in some way needed reason. On the other hand, storied faith as it unfolds in most of its history, does seek understanding, because it rests in the intimate, personal, face-to-face embrace, that constitutes openness to the Other (Levinas). In Levinas's more paradoxical language, the 'face' that draws forth the desire to embrace is the infinite peering through the veil of the finite. It cannot be totalized in some abstraction. But it can be embodied in the faith of Personal Word (*Logos*) becoming flesh (sarx). *Logos*, always an *it* in Greek thought, becomes a Person in its engagement with near-Eastern thought. So the Logos walks the road to Emmaus.[343] It is a desert road so that faith can come into its own, with no accessories, so that the heart of faith "can leap"; that is, experience the "pure Presence" (Derrida) of Other who is not present as an object at all. Other shares fish and bread around a fire. He listens and addresses. Other is impossible to contain in a box of either

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[340] Another aspect of Nietzsche's "death of God" is that it is the death of Christendom, the historical geopolitical phenomenon whereby the church laid claim to power within the shaping of Western culture. Christendom in this sense and the relational faith storied in the New Testament are worlds apart, simply. Followers of Jesus have no claim to authority or power outside the authority of gracious hospitality, claims to reclaiming Western culture, notwithstanding. In the same way, a critique of the rationalistic constructs of theology are not necessarily a critique of the unfolding story of faith, unless, of course, faith is equated with those rationalistic constructs.

[341] The great challenge of the "valuation" game, which Nietzsche himself describes, is that to value something, one must place oneself above it in the role of judge. In fairness, Nietzsche understands that this is the challenge with all attempts to value life. But is it possible to value life without some conception of life? I think Gadamer's notion of *tradition*, not as a rationalized past, but as "present" that simply arrives at my doorstep, is helpful. Whatever is, is, and the challenge of hospitality is to host it appropriately.

[342] Raschke, p. 136.

[343] Luke 24:13-35.

moral legalism or analytic philosophy. The authentic response is "My Lord!" not "Now, what again are your characteristics?" Truth is Presence, not propositions.

Derrida's deconstruction project is helpful here. Although deconstruction is not faith, it makes space for faith because it helps knowing Other as wholly Other. The opening of radical faith for Derrida is not advocating the violation of wise discernment, such as with the irrationalism in New Age thought. That is, because Other can be known only through faith—noncontentious, unassuming faith—any known meanings of Other are never completely settled and never finally explained in words. This refusal of Other to be contained or domesticated in rational systems reduced to words *is* a crucifixion, a rejection of inhospitality, and opens the way for a vocabulary of Otherness.

Derrida speaks of faith as a journey in the desert.[344] The desert does not distract. It is not a site like my perch on the Elk River to contemplate the contours of the world, to peer into its connections, symmetries, asymmetries, patterns, and holes. The question of the desert is "whether the desert can be thought and left to announce itself 'before' the Desert that we know (that of the revelations and retreats, of the lives and deaths of God)."[345] The desert is where we cannot philosophize. It is where the hot wind cracks lips and blows sand that cakes sweaty hair. The desert's sifting dunes leave no markers for time, only an imaginary of the vastness of an Other time, wholly different from our own, a time that disorients and deconstructs Greek eyes for sequence, hierarchy, and pattern. It is also the place where temptation comes, temptation to commodify the deepest spiritual longings into the epistemological conceit of unfailing propositions, a theoretical hearth and home to which no one can be invited because no one is allowed to arrive.[346] In the desert there is only what is arriving, what is on its way, even if it is an unfulfilled past. For Derrida, ontology is replaced by eschatology. Whereas modernist theology "contends for the faith once for all (time) delivered,"[347] preferring the moorings and foundations of

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[344] Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Religion," in *Acts of Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 40-101.

[345] Ibid., p. 59.

[346] Marva Dawn (2003) traces the same temptations to commodify spiritual hunger to the aggressive consumerism of the West, which requires material dominance and the exploitation of others to achieve it.

[347] Jude 3.

history reduced to a specific language around the facts of history, postmodern theology might be thought of as an invitation to draw faith forever to unmapped beginnings: "faith as the assurance of things hoped for."[348] Faith in this landscape is not some superior presupposition; nor is faith in need of a superior, absolute truth to provide foundations. Faith is not a presupposition at all. Faith is secure in itself because it is faith *of* the Other, who offers no ultimate security, theological, scientific, ontological, or otherwise, other than the security of Other's faith. There is no security at all in the desert. And if there is a well, it is hidden. What is seen is not a meticulously defined world into which faith fits, but an endless horizon of authentic (Greek *authentikos*; lit., "true to original") Presence with Other, or "pure Presence" as Derrida would have it, which faith is. The desert, as a kind of metaphor for faith for Derrida, turns hearts and minds toward what is wholly Strange, what is wholly Other, allowing arrival on terms that are wholly Other.

Derrida is wondering what might happen if the light of Enlightenment were turned out, so that once again the Way defined by Other might be found. Far from undermining faith, deconstruction is attempting to find a place for it. Zygmunt Bauman suggests that postmodernism is dark in its "dis-enchantment." It is dark, however, because it is a site-clearing operation, and he speaks of its potential to "re-enchant" all that modernity already tried hard to "dis-enchant." What he means is that modernity was all about the declaration of reason's independence; rationalism and objectivity had to take precedence over everything else. It was nothing short of a "war against mystery and magic." For rationalism to win, "the world had to be de-spiritualized, de-animated, denied the capacity of the subject." Consequently, the earth became a repository of natural resources, and whole populations became human resources, so that forests are seen as "timber rights" and the populations of developing countries as "desirable (a.k.a. *cheap*) labor resources." "It is against such a disenchanted world," Bauman says, "that the postmodern re-enchantment is aimed."[349] Bauman notes that deconstruction has a positive turn in opening the possibility for dignity to be returned to emotions, respect for

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[348] Hebrews 11:1.

[349] Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (Routledge, 1993), p. xf. As cited in Dave Tomlinson, *The Post Evangelical* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), p. 84.

ambiguity, and paradox, and "mystery is no longer a barely tolerated alien, awaiting a deportation order."[350]

Ethically speaking, both postmodernity and "the call of Other" (however that might be interpreted) require "a deep interrogation of every breathing aspect of lived experience,"[351] not merely the deconstruction of the dominant Western *Zeitgeist*, which has run out of a "credible storyline" (Hans Kung). It is here though that a concern surrounding deconstruction has arisen. Deconstruction bereft of the face of Other can isolate persons in "the misery of our self-love,"[352] or, as Levinas puts it, "the mystic disengaged from the epiphany of the face lives in isolation." This, I think, may be an inhospitality of a different sort, in which "I am You." An approach to deconstruction more in keeping with polysemic and relational notions of truth allows Other to remain Other, even as I remain I. Stated differently, if the face of Other is truly facing me, I can resist vocabularies of triumph that say, "What's yours is mine" or "You are mine" or even "I am You," adopting a vocabulary of service that says "I am Yours." Levinas ties service and hospitality together: "The relation with the other is accomplished as service and hospitality."[353] Derrida sees Abraham's running from the entrance of his tent and "bowing down to the ground" in a primal gesture of hospitality as subservience to the Other, the strangers who have arrived in their otherness, as an exemplary instance of hospitality in the Abrahamic religions. As Borg points out, this surrender is the beginning of the journey, to the heart of not only Christianity, but also the major religions of the

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[350] Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics* (Blackwell, 1993), p. 33. As cited in Tomlinson, ibid. In this light it might also be possible to see deconstruction as parallel with the first step of the three-fold way of spiritual formation in the monastic traditions of both Eastern and Western churches, that of the *viva purgativa* (*catharsis* in the East). It is the stage of revulsion and expulsion, where light is turned on the idols in one's own life to expose them, name them, and confess them. (The other two steps are the *viva illuminative* [*photosis* in the East], in which one invites the reign of joy through reading, worship, meditation, and prayer; and *theosis*, uniting with God in living out mercy and grace.) In *Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* Henry Nouwen (1975) translates these as solitude, community, and service.

[351] Angela McRobbie, "Postmodernism and Popular Culture," in Lisa Appignanesi, Ed., *Postmodernism* (Free Association Press, 1989), p. 167.

[352] John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 5. Caputo (a postmodern Augustinian) presents deconstruction as *dehellenization* (ibid., p. 6). By ensuring that theology is always marked by "undecidability," deconstruction demonstrates that "faith is always faith" (ibid., p. 15).

[353] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, Alphonos Lingis, Trans. (Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 300.

world. Judaism refers to it as "the way," the way of a new self, centered in God. One of the meanings of the word *Islam* is "surrender": to surrender one's life to Allah by radically centering one's life in Allah. At the heart of the Buddhist path is "letting go": the path that calls from death to life, calls for the death of self-seeking. According to the *Tao Te Ching*, a foundational text for both Taoism and Zen Buddhism, Lao Tzu said, "If you want to become full, let yourself be empty; if you want to be reborn, let yourself die."[354] How does this path of surrender to Other ("I am Yours") emerge?

Hospitality can be of the open-hearted, open-horizoned, open-handed, open-door variety only if there are hearts, horizons, hands, and a threshold across which Other can be invited. Without home or threshold, there can be no invitation or inclusion. As Levinas points in his early work, hospitality requires habitation. For there to be hospitality, home is requisite: "Recollection in a home open to the other [is] hospitality."[355] Although home can be a site for self-enclosure, the shutting off of oneself that constitutes individualism, it is possessed because "it already . . . is hospitable for its proprietor."[356] So "the home is the very opposite of a root. It indicates a disengagement, a wandering that has made it possible."[357]

In the same way, it is from a threshold that is already an elsewhere that the possibility of identifying aggression and violence opens. It is from an elsewhere, a wandering elsewhere, that one can raise good questions; for instance, about the common sense that it is justifiable and even virtuous to erase people to protect a particular way of life. Hospitality has boundaries, not in the static or rooted sense, but in the sense of disengagement, as pictured in Abraham, the Old Testament paradigm of hospitality, whose vision was about making room for Other and who also claimed, "A wandering Aramean was my father"; his "place" was never intended to be possessed, but was a place for the "dispossessed."[358] In much the same way, faith has nothing to draw it, no passion,

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[354] Marcus J. Borg, *The Heart of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2003), p. 119.
[355] Levinas (1969), p. 172.
[356] Ibid., p. 157.
[357] Ibid., p. 172.
[358] Deuteronomy 26:5. This was a statement of worship to remind the people of their "dispossession" as wanderers to whom God's favor flowed *outside* the land. The misreading of "the promise to Abraham" is the source of misery for millions in the Middle East today.

no compulsion, without the Other who faces me. Kierkegaard underscored this. Faith arises not because God is at the end of syllogism; nor is faith contained in a set of propositions. Rather, it arises in the indeterminate answer to the question, "Whither shall I hide from thy Presence?"[359] Hospitality is a robust possibility in the presence of Other with mutually sustaining boundary and invitation. What then is the postmodern hope surrounding the biblical text, the signifier of Presence, faith's compulsion?

'Post' Possibilities and Text

Brian McLaren is among those who argue that Western evangelicalism is dangerously and fatefully joined at the hip with the *Zeitgeist* that prevailed in the West between the late 17th and early 20th centuries. He is particularly concerned with the shape of contemporary Christianity, with its consumer demand for faith-lite, a safe, simple, and not-too-pricey product that underwrites privilege and triumph rather than open-heartedness. Because the history of modernity has coincided with book publishing and its bias toward linear thinking and logic, Protestant Christianity has tended toward bibliolatry, the worship of a flat text instead of the living Word who speaks through a multidimensional one. Modernity, he says, "only wants abstract principles, universal concepts, and disembodied absolutes. So we take an expression like 'the kingdom of God' and try to give it meaning with little context. Postmodern theology has to reincarnate, to get back into the flesh and blood and sweat and tears of the setting, because all truth is contextual."[360] Furthermore, he says, there is no "Book of Moral Absolutes," only letters and stories and prophecies about the situations in which people already find themselves. The "word of the Lord" is a personal address to "a specific someone, in a specific somewhere, at a specific time."[361] The Bible was written, he argues, by premodern people "who believed that truth is best embodied in story and art and human flesh rather than abstraction or outline or moralism."[362]

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[359] Psalm 139:7. This Psalm came to Kierkegaard on a visit to the Danish West Coast, where his father was born (http://sorenkiekegaard.org/journals.htm). On a windswept heath (a stretch of sand dunes), there was no place to hide.

[360] Brian D. McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), p. 106.

[361] Ibid., p. 107.

[362] Ibid., pp. 158-159.

Relieving the biblical writers of speaking by having them conform to forms of communication that were quite foreign to them, has been a strong tendency of both liberal and fundamentalist configurations of Christian faith. It is a common demand of a common modernist ancestry that evokes reduction on the liberal side and closure on the fundamentalist.[363] Both literalism and scientism can serve to domesticate texts. In so doing, they may tame what otherwise disrupts and redescribes the world if read in its peculiar strangeness and its particular Otherness.[364] Is it possible to allow writers to arrive dialogically as "angels and demons trapped in meat" (Thomas Merton)? Is it possible to constrain "three-pound brains" that can only begin to host the wonder of a single leaf, much less other texts that signify Presence? For Brueggemann it is the imagination of the text, "a prophetic imagination," that pressures against the totalizing consumer capitalism of contemporary life and the social indifference that it privileges. The domestication of the text to suit current political or economic agendas undermines the very thing with which the text potentially seeks to grace us: an alternative, a counter-imaginary, and, potentially, an ethic of humanness that counters an ethic of individualism and "anti-neighborliness."[365] A text, as the voice of Other, is already an invitation to hospitable response.

The essential difference between modernism and postmodernism with regard to theological texts consists in what might be termed a *propositional* rather than a *vocative* reading of Scripture. Propositional language flattens the text to one voice and confines that voice to the third person. Thus, in the project of "systematics," God is described in

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[363] Much has been written about the insufficiency of scientific approaches to the text in rendering it "speechless." A good historical study of the genesis of an empirical approach to the text in the mid-19th century is Horton Harris, *The Tubingen School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975). Harris traces out the anything but "objective" approach to the text and the nothing but "assured results" of German criticism. Marcus Borg (*The Heart of Christianity*, 2003; *Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teaching, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary*, 2006) and N. T. Wright (*Contemporary Quest for Jesus*, 2002; *Simply Christian*, 2006) are contemporary writers who help to allow the text to speak. Although they come at things from starkly different theological persuasions, they both allow the relationality of the text to shine through. In the process, it also shines through in the gracious conversations they have with each other, both publicly as at the *American Academy of Religion* and *Society of Biblical Literature Convention in* Philadelphia (2005), and in print (*The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* [San Francisco: Harper, 1999]).

[364] Walter Brueggemann, *The Word that Redescribes the World* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 2006), p. 16.

[365] Ibid. p. 151.

adjectives of an absolutist and exclusionary nature: "God is omniscient/omnipresent/ transcendent/omnipotent," and so forth. To know God is to "know *about* God." This is a problem. For one thing, adjectives of this kind do violence to Other's story as it unfolds in this world relationally. Other's story cannot be confined to words. And the words that are used to describe relations and actions are verbs.[366] A second problem is that propositional language is always about something else and rarely about things in themselves or things in relation. It relates one set of impersonal terms to another at a suprahistorical level and never really touches down. In Platonic terms, shadows overtake substance. Third, propositional language describes, but also adjudicates and annihilates. That is, propositional language, based as it is on rational consistency, creates a dualistic world of true and false, with no room for the latter or for paradox or for mysterious holes where the terms don't apply. Information *about* must pass the test of consistency before it can even be considered information.

Vocative language, on the other hand, is the language of direct address; it is the language of the second person.[367] When I invoke something, it is not really a *thing* that I am calling upon. It is a *you*, a person. I invoke *someone* who is capable of answering back. It is, as Rasche points out, not just a matter of God speaking *through* the text; rather, "God speaks to us" as specific persons in specific contexts[368]—contexts that are always social, with the real voice of the "widow, orphan, and stranger" inviting us "to imagine that the world could be different."[369] This experience of hearing is neither objective nor subjective in the strict sense; it is, rather, *intersubjective* or interpersonal. The notion of intersubjectivity, frequently misconstrued as subjectivity, is the key to postmodern theology and to its attendant hermeneutics.

Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) has made a significant contribution to the understanding of the intersubjective nature of the arrival of Other in texts.[370] For Levinas,

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[366] The Other is not an abstraction, but a participant. As Elie Wiesel says, "The Other is not an onlooker of history," in a speech to the Canadian Legal Conference entitled "The Importance of Fighting Indifference in the World Today," Calgary, August 2007.

[367] Stylistically, at least, in grammar, "you" should not be either a subject or an object.

[368] Raschke, p. 117.

[369] Bruggermann, p. 16.

[370] Levinas's project is about an "ethics otherwise than being." He was heavily influenced by Heidegger until WWII. If Heidegger was interested in 'Being,' Levinas positioned his career in *otherwise*

language, including that of biblical hermeneutics, cannot be propositional simply because it involves the *interlocution* of address and response. An *interlocutor* is a conversational partner, and interlocution implies that every communication involves two persons, self and other. And every conversation involves hearing and response. Neither can be collapsed into one or the other to stand for the sphere of "the truth" of the object or "the truth" of the subject, but both are always present, in tension with each other. To Levinas, the word of Other is not logical, but "vocative" or "dialogical."[371]

The notion that Other arrives in some sort of objective wrapping, where I only know by distancing myself is, for Levinas, mistaken. The reason is that the alleged divide between subjective and objective experience is a false dichotomy. In thinking quite reminiscent of Gadamer's notion of play, we know Other because Other is already present, in relation.[372] Whereas ontological reality is disclosed through experiences of phenomena, where an observer attempts to match language with what is exterior to language,[373] relational reality is known in the face, "a relationship different from that which characterizes all of our sensible experience."[374] Common sense is speechless before the *panim* (Hebrew, "face"). For there is nothing to describe, no characteristics, no stereotypes, no figures of speech, no predictions (moral, intellectual, or otherwise), for there are indeterminate possibilities resting in Other than can be encompassed in words. In facing you I am facing what cannot be acknowledged when I face he, she, or it. Facing Other becomes a call to begin—"In the beginning was relationship." The gaze of Other is

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than being, ethics different from being. Most biographers note both Levinas's experiences in the War (his family was murdered, he was imprisoned, and his wife survived by hiding in a monastery) and Heidegger's affiliation with Nationalist Socialism as important in his rejection of Heidegger. See, for instance, http://www.egs.edu/resources/levinas.html (retrieved August 4, 2007). See also Susan A. Handelman, *Fragments of Redemption* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 175ff. Handelman situates Levinas' relation with the Other, not as a "reflection about otherness" (philosophy) or as an imaging of otherness (aesthetics), but as "a lived relation" with Other (ethics).

[371] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, Alphonso Lingis, Trans. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 67. Levinas adds, "The word presents itself as independent of every subjective movement as the interlocutor, whose way consists in starting from himself, foreign and yet presenting himself to me" (ibid.).

[372] This is precisely the meaning of the Hebrew word *yada* ("to know"). There is no thing in itself, only things in relation. The very idea that Other could somehow be laid on a table to be examined dispassionately as an independent, uncaring, unresponsive thing is untenable. I am implicated, already arrived with Other.

[373] This distancing, Kierkegaard observed, induces "a shudder rather than devotion."

[374] Ibid., p. 187.

simultaneously interrogative, wrapped in wonder and awe; and imperative, pleading "Do not kill me," so that the relationship can unfold.[375]

A vocative reading for Levinas is summed up in a single word, *responsibility*, by which he means "non-indifference." This arises from the ethical demand elicited, drawn from the Other, not projected on Other by some narcissistic demand: "The unlimited responsibility in which I find myself forms from the otherside of my freedom."[376] Other is Other, defenseless, naked—and already before me. "The access to the face is lived in the ethical mode. The face, all by itself, has a meaning."[377] Levinas queries, "The face of the other, in its defenseless nakedness—is it not already . . . an asking? . . . A beggar's asking, miserable mortal. But at the same time it is an authority summoning me to 'appear,' summoning me to respond."[378]

In its passion for truth absolutely qualified, much of fundamentalist theology has sustained a thoroughly indifferent text in the Levinasian sense. An indifferent text is one that is "about" Other, not one that draws the community into living and lively encounters "with" Other who "faces us,"[379] speaks to us, addresses us, and resists our cooption with consumeristic self-interest by drawing us into the possibility of being a host to Other, even as Other is host to us, of sharing bread and wine and shelter.[380]

Levinas's invitation is to regard "feeling far from Other" as "not normal." Distance, it turns out, arrives on the wings of an abstraction, an Ultimate It—Absolute truth—and as a symptom of the more recent project of Enlightenment. "It" masks the face of Other facing me by wresting roles of mutual invitation and turning them into deeply adversarial roles that pit me against Other, as perceiver, critic, examiner, and, to

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[375] See http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/Levinas/#OveLev (retrieved August 12, 2007).

[376] Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Alphonso Lingis, Trans. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), p. 10.

[377] Emmanuel Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, Michael B. Smith, Trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 104. As cited in Raschke, p. 139.

[378] Emmanuel Levinas, *In the Time of the Nations*, Michael B. Smith, Trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 110. He goes on to say that "'Thou shalt love thy neighbor' not only forbids the violence of murder: it also concerns all the slow and invisible killing committed in our desires and vices, in all the innocent cruelties of natural life, . . . even in our . . . objectifying and thematizing" (ibid., p. 111).

[379] *Us* is here used as a sign of "community."

[380] What the New Testament book of Acts refers to as *koinonia* (lit., "holding in common all things").

Nietzsche, chief executioner. Distance, however, is not just in the desertion of my role of facing, as Other. It is in the destruction of nearness, which "is not a site, a state, a repose, but a restlessness, null site, outside of the place of rest."[381] Theological constructs that end in propositions undermine not only relationship with Other, but also the journey of faith—the null site—through which such relationship might arrive. Problematizing it opens a way of thinking, seeing, and theologizing, ethically, in the face, in the Truth who is Other.

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[381] Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, A. Lingis, Trans. (The Hague: Marinus Nijhoff, 1981), p. 82.

CHAPTER 6:

TOWARDS A PEDAGOGY OF HOSPITALITY: *LEARNING OTHER*

Earth is crammed with heaven
And every common bush afire with God
But only he who sees takes off his shoes.
The rest sit around it and pluck blackberries
Elizabeth Barrett Browning[382]

How is it that living in the Presence of the Other that shows up, whenever, wherever, and however she does, has become an all-but-forgotten way of living in the West? I have been particularly interested in the question of hospitality as it relates to Western theological studies, where Other may be distanced or eclipsed (Dussel) or murdered (Nietzsche). I have explored this question in four sites. In the first I sought an understanding of how relationality in the West is understood from the perspective of philosophical and theological ethics. My literature review focused almost entirely on universalist, communitarian, and postmodern options. My reading led me to understand that the social arrangement theory inscribed in these options seemed too defined and in many ways quite inhospitable to the uniqueness of Other. In addition, the imposition of sociopolitical theory prior to relations has its own violent history in the West. Through colonial habits inscribed in such totalizing notions, this violence is spread to many corners of planet Earth, especially through economic globalization.

The second site involved the ancestries of Western hospitality, conceived as open-heartedness, open-handedness, and open doors for the Stranger, particularly in the Western memory of Judeo-Christian wisdom, including its decline through processes that

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[382] Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "Sonnets from the Portuguese," *Project Gutenburg ebook*,(Released Dec. 1, 1999). Retrieved June 22, 2008, from http://www.gutenburg.org/ebooks/2002

involved the institutionalization of virtue. I also probed new horizons of relationality principally in the work of Ivan Illich, with reference to Hans-Georg Gadamer also.

The third site I explored was the Western episteme, particularly in its modernist epistemological and methodological manifestation, as a sight for making strangers, especially in the genealogies of pegging people and other ways of dividing people from each other.

Finally, I probed particular religious manifestations of the Western episteme, which were and are being employed in some expressions of Christian fundamentalism with profound inhospitality. Specifically, I looked at the obsession with absolute or propositional truth as a site for understanding the distancing of Other in theological studies. I also examined hopeful imaginaries of truth inscribed already with hospitality found in the sacred texts of fundamentalists, alongside hopeful postmodern invitations for a pedagogy of hospitality.

"Why do I feel so far from God, when I'm getting straight A's in theological studies?" That question has been a disquieting presence throughout this study. Even more disquieting has been the face of Shannon: earnest, despairing, grief-stricken at experiencing the loss of a mutual love, betrayed by the very promise that study would bring her nearer to her Beloved Other in whose Presence she desired to be. The presence of Shannon's Otherness throughout this exercise is a relentless reminder that whatever else a pedagogy of hospitality is, it does indeed begin with the Other who shows up.

I turn here to further probes towards a pedagogy of hospitality and a core question: How might openness to the Other who shows up, however, whenever, and why s/he does, become part of the very air we breathe as teachers? I am interested in answering this question primarily in the interests of theological education, though I have come to appreciate that, given the common genealogies within which Western theological education has taken shape, understanding is found within the common inheritances of education more generally. I will examine this core question around three nested questions with regard to relationality and education. First, I am interested in probing the dominant relational ideal in the Western world, tolerance, as it interfaces with education. How does this trope serve to restrict or, to use Sharon Todd's words, "to sum up" the range of

ethical possibilities in dealing with difference in education?[383] What are the exclusionary tendencies within tolerance? What are the relational possibilities beyond tolerance? My literature review revealed that modernism's commitment to viewing ethics as a question of understanding social arrangement might be summed up in this question: "What do we need to understand and know to be able to live well together?" In this imaginary, tolerance becomes the organizing virtue. What might be beyond this vision of ethicality?

Second, I want to explore the Otherness of a teacher. Is recognizing one's own place as guest a precondition for a pedagogy of hospitality? The importance of this question has largely to do with issues raised in Chapter 3 about one of the outcroppings of the Western episteme, secure identities. Secure identities are also reinforced by modern hospitality among friends, which reinforces familiarities. What might it mean to see ourselves as guests, as *learners from* rather than *teachers to* Other?

Third I want to examine the interface between one of the primary tools of teaching; that is, words, and hospitable space for Other. Here the question is not "What can I teach *about* relations with Other in pedagogical encounter?" Rather, the question is "What does the pedagogical encounter itself *hold already* as the site of relations with Other?" In other words, how does the face of Other call me to response prior to words and knowledge?

Hospitality involves the possibility of crossing boundaries and borders. Open doors, thresholds, the present are important conditions of extending hospitality conceived as openness to Other who shows up. There is an implicit *beyondness* in a pedagogy of hospitality. The face of Other facing me always disturbs the boundaries that I have constructed. Consequently, the questions under consideration here are taken up under the rubrics of *beyond tolerance*, *beyond hosting*, and *beyond words*.

Beyond Tolerance

The traditional story of the rise of tolerance (Latin, *tollere*, meaning "to lift up or bear;" *tolerantia*, meaning "to sustain") as the ideal trope of Western relationality foreshadows already significant exclusionary tendencies that are at the heart of a story

[383] Todd (2003), p. 68.

that the West is telling itself right now in the face of religious fanaticism in other parts of the world. As Benjamin Kaplin writes, "The rise of toleration becomes a myth, a symbolic story, with heroes and villains and a moral, the moral being that the precondition of toleration is the triumph of reason over faith."[384]

Kaplin is responding to the recent renewal of the traditional story about the rise of toleration by Perez Zagorin. Zagorin unfolds the story beginning with the behavior of princes and popes in instigating religious wars and what to do with people's conception of divine will that is different from one's own; that is, what to do with freedom of conscience. This traditional story rests in the *idea* of toleration being conceived in the minds of a few visionary thinkers and then being institutionalized in the law and governmental practice by ruling elites in Europe and her colonies. It is a history that marches triumphantly from St. Augustine's case for "just war" and the persecution of heretics to the Protestant Reformers who challenged the Roman Catholic Church's monopoly on truth, but not the coercion of conscience common to both traditions. It proceeds to the champions of religious toleration, including Erasmus (Luther's humanist friend) and Sebastian Castellio, who protested the execution of Michael Servetus in John Calvin's Geneva;[385] it then proceeds to the philosophers Milton (1608-1674), Spinoza (1634-1677), Locke (1632-1704), Voltaire 1694-1780), Hume (1711-1777), and Kant (1724-1804). It is a triumphal history in which the forces of progress—those who share modern values of freedom—prevail against forces that resist. It appears at first glance to be a single ladder of social progress towards the early 21st century, with Europe having achieved the pinnacle. It is the story of how reason triumphed over religious fanaticism, toleration over persecution. Since those dark early days in which Zagorin accurately details intolerance of late Medieval Christianity, there appears to be a growing tolerance throughout the early modern era (1550-1750). Europe and its former colonies have always differed from other parts of the world, he says, in that fundamentalism is still powerful, persecution still ongoing, and religious violence common. The latter have yet

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[384] Benjamin Kaplin, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 2.

[385] Servetus' death has been something of 'haunting' in historical theology, with volumes written about him in every era since his execution for heresy in 1553. Servetus was a humanist theologian and medical researcher who discovered pulmonary circulation. See Kaplan (2007) for a partial bibliography.

to progress beyond that dark phase in the history of the civilized world where the light of reason banishes the darkness of faith. As Zagorin puts it in speaking of the influence of John Locke, "The fires of religious passions were slowly dying in Europe and the last age of faith in Western civilization . . . was gradually expiring. Rationalist, deist, empiricist, and skeptical trends were making steady inroads in philosophy and theology and . . . were undermining orthodox religion and fostering free thought, indifference and unbelief. These developments . . . marked the inaugural state of Enlightenment in Europe, an era that proclaimed the autonomy and supremacy of human reason."[386] So as the light of reason banishes the darkness, the concrete manifestation of the reasonableness of the "mature religious person" becomes tolerance. In this account Zagorin argues that toleration, defined as neutrality to religious values, becomes the common sense of the contemporary world, an expression of liberation.

Benjamin Kaplin offers an Other story in the emergence of toleration, one which is based, not on ideas, but on the faces of people in popular cultures who frequently experience tolerance and peaceful coexistence as neighbors with different faiths. He covers essentially the same period of early modern history as Zagorin does, but Kaplin maintains that religious toleration actually declined from 1550 to 1750 in Europe. This was, in fact, an era of frightful religious wars as rulers harnessed religious passions to their own political ambitions. Religious wars, however, did not usually mean neighbor against neighbor. Kaplan documents numerous and widespread coexistence at local levels, which draws into question "official stories," then and now. Examples include the Protestants who worshipped in the nave of the same churches where Catholics used choir space around the main altar. In some countries, buildings that had the façades of houses were well known to authorities as congregational meeting houses for churches that were outside the pale of officially sanctioned faith. Well-defined commons were created in which people whose rival beliefs were regarded as anathema could live peaceably together.[387] Although it is hard for those schooled in modernist values to imagine, Kaplan

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[386] Perez Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 286f.

[387] This is all the more amazing when one understands that such neighborliness occurs with eternal destinies at risk.

points out how deceptive the textbook maps of early Europe actually are, based on the principal *cuius regio, eius religio* ("whose the region, his the religion"). This applied among the elites, but common folk found ways to live together even without modern values. Bloodshed was prevented not by the ideas of tolerance and private rights, but by "the common charity of common people, and by social ties that bind people together," sometimes empowered in varying degrees by the religion that also divided them.[388]

Kaplan has a concern for the mythic way in which the story of toleration has been developed.[389] He admits that the traditional story of tolerance is not all bad in that it provides a standard against which "we judge our societies," and it "lends moral weight to the calls for greater tolerance." However, Kaplan sees its chauvinism as paralyzing. "By blaming intolerance on primitive irrationality," it obscures conditions and causes that have little to do with reason or faith. Too, because no one wants to consider themselves as primitive, "it encourages us to view intolerance as someone else's vice, not ours." More subtly, the myth takes for granted "the universal validity of a single definition of toleration, our own," and in so doing narrows the range of possibility about difference "and how to deal with conflicts" that arise from them.[390] Toleration has an inhospitable side, and Kaplan warns that if toleration depends on the adoption of certain contemporary Western values—for example, the lived commitment to personal autonomy at the expense of a lived commitment to respect others[391]—its fate in the rest of the world, and perhaps in our own future, may well become uncertain.[392] Kaplan's central thesis is that people in the early modern era who did not know or share modern values found ways to live together well with difference, even with widespread violence around them.

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[388] Kaplin, p. 6.
[389] Ibid., p. 2.
[390] Ibid., p. 7.
[391] This is at the heart of Jurgen Moltmann's critique of modernity that humanness and humanity are best served, not by the quest for freedom, but by the quest for love. Latin American liberation theology also insists that love, not freedom, is the high point. The theologies of liberation seek to continue the project of liberation, but outside the tendency to ideologize relations, that turns them into abstractions rather than the living relationship with Other that they already are. That is, the project of liberation becomes part of a larger framework of relations themselves in which freedom *from* becomes freedom *for* Other. See Jurgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, Margaret Kohl, Trans. (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1981), p. 56. See also Gutierrez (1988), p. xxxviii.
[392] Ibid.

How is it that habitual facing of the Other, beyond tolerance,[393] can become part of the air we breathe in our encounters with Others, even in the presence of violence? Gertrude Conway sets her pedagogical concern for an ethic beyond tolerance in a more recent historical setting that suggests possibilities. For Conway, the response of the people of Le Chambon, France, during the Nazi occupation provides insight into a hospitable response to difference, similar to Kaplan's. It is a response that moves beyond tolerance. According to the story developed in Philip Hallie's book *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed* and Pierre Sauvage's story *Weapons of the Spirit,* the Chambonnais courageously welcomed about 5,000 strangers, including Sauvage, into their homes at grave risk to themselves. In the process they not only save these people, but, in Gertrude Conway's words, they also "exemplify what is required by hospitality, a virtue needed not only in dramatic circumstances in which strangers are at grave risk, but in the everyday interactions of strangers within local communities."[394] The story speaks to the heart of hospitality in that it addresses how we might move from being tolerant of people who are different culturally, economically, socially, or religiously to a hospitable encounter that engages the Other in contexts of mutual generosity and commonality, and in spite of vastly different identities and ideologies.

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[393] The primary debates of the last decades on tolerance have surrounded political toleration. John Rawls' (1921-2002) work (see *Political Liberalism*, 1995) has stirred much recent debate about the nature of the goal of establishing political unity and justice among diverse individuals, and extensive debate on the process of achieving it, the state's becoming increasingly neutral about moral values in the struggle for what is called a *reasonable pluralism* in both the modern state and in relations between states. Reasonable pluralism is particularly problematic in international relations, where state indifference to the moral lives of individuals, out of respect for personal autonomy and privacy, separation of church and state, respect for human rights, and so forth, is contested in cultures where such autonomy is viewed as weakening communal, moral, and religious systems. In other words, toleration is viewed as a situated Western discourse around a moral commitment to autonomy. Even in the West there is a good deal of questioning going on, for example, around how this autonomy is played out in the disadvantaging communal interests such as education and social service networks when the state self-consciously limits itself or, in the case of the neoliberal economic agenda, privileges the unhindered flows of capital, minimal taxation, and so forth, all in the name of freedom. See James M. Childs Jr. *Greed: Economics and Ethics in Conflict* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000). Childs calls economic freedom as construed under the neoliberal agenda a misappropriation of freedom: "Freedom is a relationship between persons. Being free means 'being free for the other.' . . . Only in relationship with the Other am I free" (p. 26). Glenn Newey is attempting to find ways to establish toleration within virtue. See Glenn Newey, *Virtue, Reason, and Toleration* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1999).

[394] Gertrude Conway (2002), "Strangers in Our Midst: From Tolerance to Hospitality," *Analytic Teaching,* Vol. 23. No. 1, p. 43.

The Chambonnais were a distinct, deeply rooted, and closely knit French Huguenot community with very distinct religious practices that arose from unique faith commitments. Yet these people welcomed foreigners into their homes at great risk:

> What comes across powerfully in the Le Chambon narratives is their welcoming of these Others in a way which did not require them to abandon their own identity, beliefs and practices. . . . Although their compassionate response was rooted in strong regard for the shared humanity of the Other, their hospitable response clearly was affected by a recognition of irreducible difference. Because of this recognition, they were able to offer hospitality to those who were different from themselves, respectfully acknowledging their variant convictions, beliefs and practices. Rather than simply tolerating their guests differences, they respectfully affirmed them, welcoming these Others into their community, encouraging them to live as practicing Jews.[395]

The story goes on to describe the ways in which opportunities for interaction enhanced relationship and broadened horizons— Jews were encouraged to live as Jews and to practice their faith—and to describe their faith and practice to the Chambonnais. At the same time they were welcomed into homes whose daily ways were shaped by very different belief and practice. Although they expected the refugees to recognize distinctive ways, they made every effort to make them feel at home. Conway interviewed Nellie Trocme, widow of the pastor of Le Chambon, André Trocme, and reports that André was adamant that his parishioners were not to attempt to convert the refugees to their strongly felt and lived convictions. "The refugees had to be welcomed and respected as Others with robust identities."[396] Decades afterward, the refugees reveal the enduring impact of this encounter. They describe the welcome they received, which included efforts to ensure that all of their needs, including religious ones, were met. "The power of Le Chambon story rests in these villagers' ability to recognize and affirm a common humanity expressed in difference."[397]

The needs of the stranger are sometimes so compelling that we look past the stranger to the need. In Chapter 2, I showed the proclivity for this under the logics of efficiency in the growing bureaucracies of Constantinianism in the West. In the process

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[395] Conway, p. 44.

[396] Ibid.

[397] Ibid. Another example of hospitality in Western history is how a golden age of Jewish culture flourished in the golden age of Islamic ascendency in Spain in the early middle ages.

an essential component of hospitality is bypassed: the response that the face of Other already requires in their presence. Holding both common humanity and a distinct identity as German Jews, French Huguenots, Shia Muslims, secular humanists, and so on, recognition of commonality in the face of the stranger facing me displaces assimilation. I also recognize that these human needs, desires, and goals are addressed and pursued in unique communities and contexts that include different ways of being human. Tendencies to assimilation are resisted in the face of Other, only as the face of Other calls me to respond prior to principles of tolerance, care, tact, or even hospitality.

Conway problematizes tolerance as it has come to rest in relational life in the West, especially in educational settings. She says, "The postmodern celebration of pluralism, characterized by a spirit of open mindedness extolling the virtue of tolerance, appears to be grounded in the acceptance of the groundlessness of all beliefs and claims."[398] Persons respect the diversity of one another's traditions only by embracing their equally contingent and arbitrary status. There seems, Conway adds, "to be no motive for taking the other seriously or even oneself for that matter." Rather than increased respect or enhanced engagement, esteem for all perspectives, values, or beliefs, one's own, and the Other's, are diminished. "All becomes leveled."[399] Such tolerance, Conway argues, actually creates indifference toward the Other. Tolerance provides only one universal appeal; namely, that we accept pluralism and simply acknowledge its inevitable existence. This rather reductionistic account of relationships requires only that we live and let live and ensure that, above all else, I not interfere with the Other's way of life. A kind of mutual conspiracy of silence comes to exist between persons as "we put up with the other so long as they don't disrupt our own way of life."[400] It offers no reason for facing the Other seriously, for welcoming them through my door. It denies that their presence is already a disruption. Such tolerance is at best a negative, passive virtue that leads to a detached indifference to the Other and provides no motivation for facing the Other, no reason for the open conversation enabled by the response of hospitality.

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[398] Conway, p. 46.
[399] Ibid.
[400] Ibid.

Transformed into mutual indifference, "such tolerance leaves us merely affirming pluralism, without attempting any active engagement of difference."[401]

The hospitable response of the Chambonnais is a contrasting approach to the stranger, with her/his strange ideas, beliefs, and values. Beyond the leveling effects of tolerance, the promise of the Stranger in the midst awaits; the promise about me, about them, about us, and about the worlds we inhabit awaits, but not by way of tolerance. In the midst of another gathering Diaspora in early 20th-century Russia, the Rabbi in Sholem Aleichem's *Fiddler on the Roof* is asked, "Is there a blessing for the Czar?" The Rabbi responds, "Of course. 'May God bless and keep the Czar . . . far away from us!'"[402] Such a response may have been possible when the population of the world was 1.5 billion, but how could such a response be considered in a world of 6.5 billion? Golde's response as the family is ready to move to Chicago, now expelled from their ancestral home, is much more evocative of hospitable imagination. As she rushes back to sweep the floor of a home that will belong to Others—enemy Others—she declares, "I will not leave a dirty house for them!"[403] What is the possibility for a pedagogy that faces and engages the Other, a pedagogy of hospitality?

As Conway observes, the response of the Chambonnais bears similarities to Gadamer's understanding of an engaged response to pluralism in the sensitive negotiation of our prejudices and responses to that which is strange to us. Gadamer's inquiry begins in an openness to the community and its traditions, among other communities and traditions, in which each person is embedded rather than an abandonment of them, as various kinds of empirical inquiry suggest. All human understanding is derived from inherited ways of making sense of the world, the *ethnos*, the conditions into which my birth placed me.[404] Each inquirer stands committed to and confident in a view of the world into which he/she has been initiated. What maintains confidence and simultaneously controls arrogance, privilege, and superiority is that one extends the same recognition of horizons to others, with their own communities and traditions. Differences

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[401] Ibid.
[402] Retrieved May 14, 2008, from http://enwikiquote.org/wiki/Fidder_on_the_Roof
[403] Ibid.
[404] Illich, 2000, p. 45.

there are. But neither pretended agreement nor indifference to the differences as a premise for relationship is presumed. As noted, a sense of proportionality invades the encounter. The stranger may remain a stranger with regard to beliefs and values, but rather than resting with the mere respectful acknowledgment of such diversity, Gadamer draws one toward engagement rather than disengagement, embrace rather than exclusion, hospitality rather than indifference. Here one also rests in the hope that Other who arrives will announce themself,[405] along with a possibility of a fusion of horizons of understanding that arrive beyond "our wanting and doing," disturbing my prejudices as I am "played" by the arrival[406]

Such engagement places demands on persons. Engaging Others requires facing Them, opening self, in mutual alterity. The conversation demands more than merely recognizing the Other and becomes possible only with the practice of a cluster of hermeneutic virtues: openness to the disclosure of the Other, a desire to understand and do justice to the claims of what is disclosed, an imaginative empathy that allows seeing the Other as Other; and a courage to examine prejudgments and critique passively received commitments. The Other's standpoint "become intelligible without our having to agree with them."[407] We can be hospitable, without alien agendas to convert, colonize, patronize, or otherwise turn the Other into a pawn of instrumentality. A pedagogy of hospitality seeks to embrace difference, not as a means of subjugation, but as a means of affirming mutuality within difference. It is the creative, joyous, risky, and fear-filled tension of mutuality and incommensurability that is the driving force of the hospitable life. Difference is not dissolved under the regime of control through predetermined categories, the inevitable prejudice of the stable self, nursed by notions of absolute truth notwithstanding.[408] Nor does it become everything, in the isolated, unstable self, thus reducing resistance to rhetoric. Instead, it seeks a mutuality of encounter, a transmodernity (Dussel).

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[405] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed., J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall, Trans. (New York: Crossroad, 1989), p. 248.

[406] Ibid., p. 301.

[407] Ibid., p. 303, fn. 23.

[408] David G. Smith (1988), "Children and the Gods of War," *Journal of Educational Thought*, Vol. 22A, No. 2. As cited in Jardine (2000), p. 169.

I think this is particularly pertinent to reading Other texts as well. As noted in Chapter 4, religious truth can easily be reduced to the absolute configurations of propositions. Such readings lose sight of the strangeness of the text, written by strangers in strange circumstances. A precondition for a text's arrival, especially those written from *below*,[409] would seem to be their Otherness. It is a tolerant reading, a kind of false intimacy, in this case with the past, that flattens the text and domesticates it so that in my selective reading of it, it only speaks for my interests, and perhaps yours as well. This gives permission to power games of various sorts, to voices of the night circulating undetected, and to epistemologies that are foreign to Presence itself, to flourish in exclusionary ways within theological education particularly. Under the vocabulary of "The Bible says . . . ," certain propositional statements rationalistically determined as the final word actually serve to domesticate and declaw the text so that "the mantra of widow, orphan, alien" becomes silenced by an assured future.[410] If, on the other hand, truth of a text does become the mantra of the Stranger, primordially relational, vocatively unfolding, and never final, then such a reading confronts me with an invitation to hospitable embrace. Other facing me is open to embrace and awe. Other is not an abstraction open to analysis. Vocative reading is an invitation converse in a relationship already brimming with difference, *evoked and received* by readers attentive to the Otherness of the text, its concrete, particular circumstance. As Parker Palmer puts it, "We do not know the truth. The truth knows us." As such it is an "eternal conversation."[411]

This means that there is no single reading, but a multiplicity of readings that, allowed to converse, withstand absolutizing and every imposition of dominant or hegemonic category. Conversation is of the essence in this approach lest the readings be rendered autonomous, with implicit totalizing tendencies. In a sense the text, embraced vocatively as calling me rather than propositionally as my naming it, draws me to respect—respect for Who has arrived in their radical Otherness. Furthermore, it invites me to a communal rendering of life, understanding that it is in a hermeneutical

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[409] Most of the New Testament texts were written from prison, from exile, and in conversations around a world of unfolding relations. They were written much like liberation theology was written—from beside the poor and the oppressed.

[410] Brueggemann, 2006, p. 131.

[411] Parker Palmer, 1993, p. 104.

community that my usual horizons, prejudices, and presuppositions are being addressed by Others present.

If the text is inhabited by Another unlike either the settlements of familiar creedal formulations or rational modes of control, the Other can speak outside of stable expectations, sometimes elusively, yielding fragments, hints, and traces of a hospitable kind, but that never add up to a single claim. Reading a text as Unfamiliar permits a kind of disorientation or displacement, even perhaps a terror, that enables the Other to be heard for the first time. Embracing the unfamiliar Other of the text keeps the text relationally alive and inhibits the text from "coming under" (Schlatter) propositional, absolutist notions of truth that reduce the text to abstraction and Same that finally eclipse the Other. Buber's "Thou" and Levinas's "alterity" function in the same way and are designed to resist stable worlds of meaning, which are encryptions of control writ large and eventually inhospitable and oppressive. In this, texts do not serve as an absolute authority or rule of faith,[412] but resist assurances, extending outstretched hand and open heart, *now*, to life, and death en route. We move beyond "take up and read"[413] to conversing, contemplating, and responding in an unfolding story with Other in which we find ourselves, here, now.

Gadamer affirms the value of such conversation: Through engaging the Other's values and beliefs, self-understanding arrives. Hosting the Stranger brings one to articulate and examine the tradition to which one belongs, thus occasioning a more reflective faith and practice. Bringing beliefs to the table challenges thoughtless conformity and enables an assessment of truth-claims, a questioning of behaviors and attitudes, and allows passively transmitted claims to be critiqued. Similarly, with mutual disclosure and dialogue there is a mutual attending to claims, insights and oversights, agreements and disagreements that uncovers what was once unseen. Without significant difference there is really no particular need for conversation. But the face already speaks

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[412] Etymologically, *authority* (from L. *auctor*; lit., "one who originates") applies only to persons, not to things. Strictly speaking, only persons have authority.

[413] St. Augustine (354-430 CE) spoke these words in the story of his conversion to Christianity in "The Confessions of St. Augustine" (Book 8, Chapter 12), J. G. Pilkington, Trans., Philip Schaff, Ed., *A Selected Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Series 1, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1882).

in "the traumatism of astonishment" and of how this "absolutely foreign alone can instruct us."[414] It seems that a precondition for hospitality is that one recognize the mutuality of being Other, of being both Stranger/Guest and Host.

I will explore the Otherness of hosting more fully in the next section. I think it is important to acknowledge here that there are significant potential gifts of learning that await me when I face the Other and open myself to the Other that is me. Seeing myself as the absolutely foreign in need of hosting has the potential to instruct. Perhaps this is most pertinent to theological education, in which a misleading kind of religious teaching would have me believe that only angels, only the Divine should inhabit my heart. However, the estrangement I experience in the face of the Other may be my own. There is a Divine spark when I'm at my worst. There is also the possibility of nastiness when I'm at my best. Seeing these not as binaries, but as closely intertwined helps me to understand that, instead of weed control, denial, suppression, or other kinds of violence, these things need kindness, attentiveness, and hospitality too. And I'm learning that a healthy garden *has* to hold both the "wheat and the weeds." Rainer Maria Rilke believed that if he got rid of his demons, his angels might also leave. "Perhaps all the dragons in our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us act, just once, with beauty and courage. Perhaps everything terrible is, in its deepest essence, something helpless that needs our love."[415] "How else would I ever know the one bright field that held the treasure, . . . the well which unblocks living water?"[416] Instead then of finding strategies to overcome shadows, standing over them to dominate and control them, wisdom traditions encourage me to invite them in as guests, to sit with them for a while, to not name them too quickly, and, finally, to be liberated from dependency on the belief that there is no darkness within the light in which I claim to dwell. In every joy abides a suffering twin. This is the way it is, the way of wisdom. Inhospitality here is little else than denial of the inconveniences that constitute my humanness.

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[414] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* p. 43.

[415] Rainer Maria Rilke, "The Dragon-Princess" from *On Love and Other Difficulties*, John J. L. Mood, Trans. As cited in O'Leary, p. 53.

[416] Ibid.

Openness to the Stranger who is me has all kinds of possibility to entertain both darkness and light, not by overcoming either, nor by simply putting up with either, but by allowing the presence inscribed in hospitable embrace to do its work. Like caring composting shows, sour things are sweet. In the same way, although some may find that never having to face a Stranger is a gift, it is a very poisoned one.

In such a space where boundaries need to be crossed as well as preserved, the rich dance of mutuality begins. As Conroy states:

> It seems that hospitality is the precondition of the possibility of such a fusion of horizons. Hospitality opens the possibility of our attending to each others' claims. . . . Entering dialogue in such a spirit of hospitality, we stand both committed to our own point of view and open to the equally committed claims of the other. Such a posture requires an understanding of our human finitude, a recognition of fallibilism, that insight that we may be wrong and the other right. Hospitable dialogue is distinguished by a certain intellectual humility whereby one assumes one is not mistaken, yet remains humbly open to such possibility. . . . Such respect for the Other does not require that we accept the Other's claims but that we be open to the possible disclosure of truth. We stand committed to the constellation of beliefs and claims which define our "final vocabulary" and at the same time remain open to their revision, . . . avoiding both an overconfident dogmatism which refuses to subject itself to revision and a skepticism which concedes that all is groundless. Such fallibilism presupposes there is a truth to be known.[417]

Such engagement of the stranger, fully present with beliefs, values, and practices, is rooted in hospitality with its overarching privilege of providing respect to persons in their difference. Hospitality seems especially appropriate to Western education, which prizes values of autonomy and noninterference based on a live-and-let-live response to pluralism.

Encountering and embracing the unforeseen horizons present in the Other is about entering the *re*-cognition of the Other, already Present. I recognize the one who is out of bounds culturally, linguistically along my path in the ditch, and I create the supreme form of relatedness that is not given by life's circumstances, "but created by" me.[418] To attempt to turn this voluntary, created relationship into an abstract universal is to destroy it in the process. Hospitality extended to the Other, by its nature, is a concrete tie between two

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[417] Conway, p. 47.
[418] Illich, ibid., p. 6.

people, fleshy, bodily, carnal, Other.[419] There is, after all, no way of categorizing who my neighbor ought to be or how he ought to live. She simply stands there, and I face her. Or I turn away. Hospitality lies in facing and receiving the Other as the primordial gift She is.

Beyond Hosting

Hospitable relations are not something with which I arrive in pedagogical moments and spaces. They are unfolding, in the moment of encounter. How does this unfolding happen, and what does it look like? Is a teacher only a host, the one who makes room for Others arrival? Or is one also a guest? And how might hospitable relations unfold in a horizon of mutual Otherness? I want to explore here how a horizon of my own Otherness as a teacher, beyond principles of ethics or theology, is inscribed in hospitable encounter. The importance of this question is threaded throughout this discussion of secure identities. Whether secure identities are reinforced by Hellenistic conceptions of hospitality among friends (Chapter 2) or by outcroppings of the Western episteme (Chapter 3) or by notions of truth bereft of relationality (Chapter 4), they appear to be a considerable problem in the practice of hospitality as openness to whoever arrives. What might it mean to see ourselves as guests of students rather than as their teachers?

Hospitality as something that I offer to the Stranger is among the first things that come to mind in reflecting on what it means to be a hospitable person; that is, how I might embody warm-hearted openness as a robust practice. Consideration, however, of the exclusions that operate within methodologies and epistemes contributes to an understanding of how hospitality itself might be reduced to technique and offered from a power position of self-service rather than as an invitation to mutuality and reciprocity.

Pedagogy[420] can also be subsumed as a technique, a predictable and controllable practice that is isolated from persons, a functionality without presence. Despite attempts to render it such, pedagogy resists this by remaining something of a mystery around who

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[419] Ibid.

[420] Webster's *Complete Dictionary of the English Language* defines a *pedagogue* (Greek *piados*, "a child"; *again*, "to lead") as "1) one who instructs a child; 2) one who conducts a child to school." *Pedagogy* is defined as "1)the profession or function of a teacher; 2) the art or science of teaching, especially, instruction in teaching methods." The latter definition, especially, reduces the learner/learning leader encounter to professionalism, functionality, and the application of methods, which pushes one of the most intimate relational encounters possible into the shadows.

the teacher is in relation to students and their learning and, specifically, how the teacher attends to her/his own presence in relation to Other learners. Its mystery may indeed be the first condition of a pedagogy of hospitality. It may be a pedagogue's absence of control, her/his own estrangement that creates possibilities, even robust ones, for welcome. As David I. Smith observes, within pedagogical relations, emphasizing "being a host at the neglect of the call to becoming a particular kind of Stranger" even to one's own profession and, obviously, to the stable self by which I categorize myself *over* others "is a serious imbalance."[421] A focus on hospitality without realizing my own position as Stranger to others far too easily cohabits, especially in the ancestry of European empire, feelings of cultural superiority and moral worth. The ease with which pegging students is possible when I see them in various categories (bright, not so bright, pleasant, hard working, impudent, etc.) that I import into a classroom highlights the danger of one-sided hospitality. Even the category *student* can have the effect of creating an environment for condescension. As David I. Smith puts it, "Playing host without realizing that one is also a Stranger to the Other can lead to the unfortunate situation of harboring a condescending attitude while at the same time feeling more virtuous for one's noble attempts (at hospitality)."[422] Dwelling only on how *I* lead, teach, instruct, guide, mentor *them* confuses hospitality with something "I deliver," a form of hubris that appears to oneself to be a virtue. The desire to better the lives of others is a good thing, but as Amy Oden notes, it is "seductive, even dangerous, for the host to view herself as the helper. The would-be act of hospitality becomes an act of condescension and a failure to see . . . the host as hero and guest as victim."[423]

In this light I continue to come to an understanding of why I went into education and why I continue in it. I have come to realize that the need to be needed and the fear of not being needed play a large role. They can play themselves out in very unhealthy ways, creating toxic spaces ripe for dependencies and co-dependencies to grow, but I have a growing self-awareness that the arrival of a student or a group of them brings a strange

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[421] David I. Smith, *The Gift of the Stranger Revisited.* Retrieved August 20, 2006, from www.spu.edu/orgs/nacfla/Editorial2006.htm

[422] Ibid.

[423] Amy G. Oden, Ed., *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), p. 109.

commingling of other guests—grace and fear. And to be open to the Other, openness to these attending guests inside of me, rather than resisting, denying, or otherwise treating them as imposters, can also be a rich seed bed for experiencing both mutual humanness and mutual embrace. I, after all, have not arrived, but am also the one showing up.[424]

To position myself then only as host, as the one providing space, even though I may try to be an open-hearted one, is still to lay claim to and therefore to strangulate the mutuality of hospitable space and time. Being the Stranger I am already, here, now, on the other hand, helps me to see myself as one beside or with a participant in the transformations that are the fruit of encountering the Stranger. A pedagogy of hospitality proposes to shift the sightlines from the door to the world that *I* open and close to the Stranger facing me, to the moment and space of mutual encounter, together with all the differences in the world possible between us. The shift in view invariably leads to transformation, because I begin to see the degree to which my own horizon (Gadamer) has become the only one, now imposed on all of reality, including my class in front of me and how, in making it the whole picture, I have practiced abandonment by turning a community of persons into an isolated thing simply by beginning with myself as isolated.

A pedagogy of hospitality is not about retooling myself to make some space for compassion or pity. On the other hand, neither is it about developing a simplistic discourse that "I am the Stranger here," which too easily morphs into self-pity.[425] There is inevitably a place for bad days that I experience, but staffroom gossip around "my bratty class" reveals how easily this can happen. On the other hand, as we sit together in a class,

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[424] Although I know that there are limits to vulnerability here, there is also the great reward of loving embrace transforming fear into friendship.

[425] The second part of "the great commandment" in Western Christian tradition is regularly misinterpreted in my view, in a highly imperialistic way quite opposite of the open invitation that it is. We are asked to "love our neighbor as ourselves." In Western tradition the first flight is to think about how I like to be loved and then to extend that same love to the Other. The transaction turns love into a solipsistic (and ugly) expression of the stable self, to be doled out within my capricious choice. The same can be said for the Golden Rule (Do unto others as you would like others to do unto you). In both instances, however, the invitation is not to a solipsistic recognition, but to a communal one. That is, there is solidarity in our mutuality, in our mutual need for love, respect, and so on. As an African proverb says, "We love. Therefore we are." (There are theological underpinnings to notions of "the love of the autonomous will" arising from Greek and later Protestant notions of deity that are beyond this immediate discussion. I also think that some notions of self-esteem are derivatives of this highly situated and solipsistic Western consciousness that closes off the deep mutuality assumed in all persons that is part of this ancient wisdom.)

to my class my ways are contingent and sometimes just plain odd. A pedagogy of hospitality begins in the wholehearted, warmhearted embrace of the Stranger that I am, with my fears, and other voices of the night, *along with* my self-satisfactions, self-righteousness, and my various needs, and so forth, without which the Other will forever be vulnerable to my abandonment and violence. If pedagogy begins in a mutuality of estrangement, it has the possibility of being extended in a way that sees my students, even as my own pedagogue, leading me sometimes to places of suffering and estrangement I would rather not go, but which places have their own proffer of mutual embrace. This does not mean the abandonment of my responsibility to lead as a teacher; only that the precondition for leading in the arts of hospitality, which include compassionate responsibility, rests in mutuality. A pedagogy of hospitality begins in heeding one's own estrangement.

I think that attentiveness to one's own estrangement is particularly pertinent in theological education. The possibility of a growing divide between private inner worlds and the good news that invites announcing bears witness to this.[426] Part of the reason for this disintegration is that the good news that invites announcing has, through forces of epistemic secularization, become an abstraction lived in the head, a set of valuable ideas reduced to words. I will discuss this more momentarily. Here, another reason for this divide is the inability to be intimate with the truth of my own life, with where the good news rests in my own life. Henri Nouwen[427] proposes that this is at the heart of the quest for power that has afflicted the church since Constantine. With the rationalization that power "for the glory of God" was a good thing, "crusades took place; inquisitions were organized; Indians were enslaved; positions of great influence were desired; Episcopal palaces, splendid cathedrals and opulent seminaries were built; and much moral manipulation of conscience was engaged in. . . . Every time we see a major crisis in the

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[426] Jesus' critique of the externalization of Jewish faith and morality as practiced in the Pharisaism of Second Temple Judaism as an attempt to create defined worlds of purity and impurity is a possible example of this.

[427] Henri J. M. Nouwen (1932-1996) was a writer, Catholic priest, psychologist, pastoral theologian, and spiritual director whose influence has extended across religious boundaries and includes several generations of evangelical leaders. He spent most of his academic career at Harvard, Yale, Notre Dame, and the Meninger Institute. During the last part of his life he sought a life of "service, solitude, and community" in the L'Arche community for the mentally challenged in Toronto.

history of the Church, . . . including the immense secularization of the 20th century, we always see that a major cause of the rupture is the power exercised by those who claim to be followers of the poor and powerless Jesus."[428] What makes the temptation of power so seemingly irresistible? Nouwen suggests that it is easier to "be God" than to "love God," easier to "control life" than to "love life." It is easier to talk about "Who is my neighbor?" than to love the one who is already near. It is easier, he says, because vulnerability is hard. "The temptation to power is greatest when intimacy is a threat." Much Christian leadership is exercised by people "who do not know how to develop healthy, intimate relationships and have opted for power and control instead. Many Christian empire-builders have been people unable to give and receive love."[429]

How do we begin to develop this vulnerability to warmly welcome what shows up within us, so critical to a warm welcome of Other? Jean Vanier sees it unfolding in the context of welcoming as a guest, "the person within us who is weak and poor."[430]

I need to touch the truth of what is going on in my own life, to be in contact with "hidden places of pain." It is as I grow gradually into acknowledging wounds and fragility that "life begins to flow." As we become "a friend of our weakness and humanity," we become a friend.[431] Obviously, facing the truth of the Other I am can be very distant if truth is already contained or controlled in the truth of propositions and conceptions about Other. In fact, theological education may become one of the most dangerous places on earth if it becomes a place where I claim some sort of ascendency over my own inner limits and brokenness through the denials of theological triumphalism. "The roots of much racism, rejection and exclusion are here."[432] If the shadows are not welcomed, they remain free to roam, destroying as they go.

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[428] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1993), pp. 58-59.

[429] Ibid., p. 60

[430] Jean Vanier, *Befriending the Stranger* (Toronto, ON: Novalis Books, 2005), p. 60. Vanier is the founder of the network of *L'Arche* communities worldwide.

[431] Ibid., p. 61. Vanier's model for this is Jesus' practice as recorded in the New Testament. One of his examples is from John 4, the story of Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman at a well in which Jesus, in a nonjudgmental way, affirms her own story about not having a husband. Jesus says, "What you have said is true" (John 4: 17-18). Vanier says that "it is only having accepted the inner truth of our lives that we cease to be governed by the lies and illusions" and a wholeness that includes all of life can begin to flow to others.

[432] Ibid., p. 63.

Vanier quotes a letter that Carl Jung sent to him that is very much to the point of being open to what shows up in the private life of a teacher:

> I admire Christians, because when you see someone who is hungry or thirsty, you see Jesus. When you welcome a stranger, someone who is "strange," you welcome Jesus. When you clothe someone who is naked, you clothe Jesus. *What* I do not understand, however, is that Christians never seem to recognize Jesus in their own poverty. You always want to do good to the poor outside you and the same time you deny the poor person living inside you. Why can't you see Jesus in your own poverty, in your own hunger and thirst? In all that is "strange" inside you: in the violence and the anguish that are beyond your control? You are called to welcome all this, not to *deny* its existence, but to accept that it is there and to meet Jesus there.[433]

A pedagogy of hospitality in theological education begins not with the truth that would deny, shelter, ignore, or even eviscerate our wounds. Rather, it begins in the welcomed Other, already present in my humanity as arrived, not as *ubermenche*, but whole already with shadows and brokenness not to be overcome, but faced.

The presence of a certain vulnerability within teaching may also hold some options for dealing with the pain of a thousand alienations that lie at the heart of bullying, a scourge in Western education. In times of terror I think the imperial consciousness is that we are entitled to forgo the suffering inflicted by others, which is a very small step indeed to "You don't matter" or "We're the only ones who do matter." This is buttressed, I believe, because the ideas of toleration and liberty may actually draw their meaning from what they negate; that is, oppression and what we will not tolerate. A brief anecdote will illustrate. In August 2006, as waves of Israeli bombers continued to pound Lebanon, my Lebanese neighbor stopped on her evening walk. "Who will speak for us?" she asked. She talked about her contact with our Member of Parliament to protest Canada's pro-Israeli stance in the conflict. She had explained to him the very different picture of the Middle East and the conflict that Lebanese Canadians have. He had told her "the usual," that Hezbollah are on the Canadian government's "terrorist list" and that "we don't negotiate with terrorists." She explained to me how this same public branding by government leaders had affected her son, who "is currently not Hezbollah." He had

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[433] Ibid., p. 64.

started electrical engineering studies in the spring at a Canadian university, but had just dropped out. She explained that two of his classmates had accosted him over lunch, charging that "he should be wearing an ankle bracelet, so we can keep track of you." He didn't feel comfortable at all having to contend with their suspicions. She reported that the MP had told her, "We stand on principle, so we don't need your vote," which made her abandonment easy to understand.

Principles, as a general rule, don't need *persons.* They certainly don't need any kind of relational vulnerability. This is a stark terror all its own. Yet a perfectly symmetrical discourse exists in schools on bullying. What really is the difference between zero tolerance for bullying and "We don't need your vote" or "We don't negotiate with terrorists"? Are these not discourses of negation that place violence and perpetrators beyond the pale of relations? It is only from a lofty perch over Others that I can say these things: *We do not need them, nor those who speak for them, nor* (as with my Lebanese neighbor) *those who are guilty by association. We are entitled to our own peace.* This peace, though, is violent. Deflecting my own fears about suffering by refusing to invite them, the terrors and the terrorists, to common space and time perpetuates terror and suffering. The issue is not about who will speak for whom, but rather about the obsession with peace and security that creates lists in the first place about who I will or will not listen to. This selectivity, I understand, undermines the very earth of human (*humus*; lit., "of the earth") community, which survives in the mutual seed bed of needing each other for who each is, regardless of contribution or functionality. Strangely, I think it also undermines the civic commons upon which Western democracy is built, which depends on the presence of all voices, complete with their differences, not just privileged ones.

"We don't face terrorists" has, surely, considerable potential through the radicalization of not-bully-yet-children and young people to produce inhospitality in schools. As David G. Smith asks within the context of globalization and education, how does it work that a teacher or heavily bureaucratized educational systems can actually live out the hospitality required of global citizenship when "the new politics [of bullying]

is imbricated in exactly the opposite direction"?[434] If it is legitimate to unilaterally name the principles and categories of relationality and list people accordingly in the public realm, doesn't that same unilateralism become the basis for classroom, staffroom, and schoolyard relations?[435]

Of course, the dynamics of modernist education are not only vertically driven, but also captivated by rational strategies of technocratic engineering. The psychological force behind this technocratic paradigm is security and safety, especially because these ensure the predictability and control of the institution, collateral damage notwithstanding. Within such a "regime of truth"[436] then, the question remains: How could the essential message ("I don't need some of you!") *not* become part of the relational common sense of young people? Such a message is terrifying in the extreme within the context of current attempts to orchestrate definitions of both history and geopolitical space in terms of absolute loyalties: "Either you are for us or you are against us."[437]

Seeing myself as Guest rather than Host generates vulnerability. It is risky to step out from behind static principles of truth or morality. Although these provide security and control, they have also clouded my gaze of Other. Instead, as Guest I face the Other in a symmetry of mutual service, not in a new hierarchy, but in a disassembled one, and, in the face of an Enemy, an inverted one. In *Otherwise than Being* Levinas writes, "The knot of subjectivity consists in going to the other without concerning oneself with his movement toward me. Or, more exactly, it consists in approaching in such a way that, over and beyond all the reciprocal relations that do not fail to get set up between me and

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[434] David G. Smith (2006), p. 11.

[435] Zygmunt Bauman has described how the bureaucratic culture of modernity made modernity the perfect "host" of the Holocaust: "one who would not be at home in any other house." The bureaucratic culture provides the conditions whereby society is seen "as an object of administration, as a collection of so many 'problems' to be solved, as 'nature' to be 'controlled,' 'mastered' and 'improved' or 'remade,' as a legitimate target for 'social engineering.'" It was "the spirit of instrumental rationality, and its modern, bureaucratic form of institutionalization" that made the Holocaust-style solutions "not only possible, but eminently reasonable" (Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989], p. 17f. As cited in Volf, p. 281.

[436] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), p. 133. "Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A 'regime' of truth."

[437] Ibid. A rather stark summary of current Western "foreign policy" vis-à-vis "extremism," which George W. Bush stated explicitly in the aftermath of 9/11.

the neighbor, I have always taken one step more toward him."[438] Such vulnerability is inevitably risky. Hospitality is a gamble because it involves boundaries and ancestral markers that I've told myself about forever. Some of these have provided a sense of security, value, privilege, and so forth, regardless of how little or much they may be a mirage. They are there. Will my movement be appreciated or rejected? Will I be misunderstood? Will I be despised or embraced? Will my hospitality be received in mutuality, or will I feel transgressed and used in opening my heart with space and time that is boundaried? If it turns out that I open the door to an Enemy, will I learn that *Via Dolorosa* (Latin; lit., "road or way of suffering") also holds learning and life? What will that be like? Given the gentleness of being a guest, there is no guarantee of reciprocity. Nor does one know in advance how the reshaping of self and Other will take place. Only one outcome is probably not possible: A genuinely hospitable encounter cannot leave either of us unchanged. If nothing else, hospitality draws me across a boundary of anxiety and helps me understand that at the end of the day, courage is not the absence of fear, but the presence of Other to be opened to, beyond my fear.

How dramatically change can occur, and how deeply the impact of change can impact in the midst of the vulnerability of hospitable relations may be illustrated in a story from the first week of my teaching career. A geography class of that week lingers as a moment when past and future are folded together in layered landscapes of vulnerability. It is also a moment when the Levinasian observation that the "absolutely foreign alone can instruct us."[439] Being one of only three hires in secondary social studies in the Calgary Public system in 1973, euphoric privilege—a strange mix of joy and pride that was sometimes hard to distinguish—might best describe how I felt. That last class of the first week revealed how my new identity as teacher might unfold in-relation. I also learned after the fact that it could have ended my career.

My first teaching assignment involved three classes of Social 10 and two each of Social 20 and Geography 20 students. Geography 20 was for students with credit deficiencies or those who "can't handle" the social studies route. There were other

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[438] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, p. 84.
[439] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 43.

options such as law, psychology, and sociology, but geography was regarded as the last option; as a colleague consoled one day, "a dumping course for kids that just need the credits." He also said that he had "done his time" teaching the course and that he was glad that there was a new hire to "draw the short straw" for Geography 20. Additionally, the school itself was only two years old, in the middle of an upwardly mobile community with all of the privilege of new wealth, and there were pressures for success in a highly instrumentalized view of education. Another teacher later told me that Geography 20 was "like purgatory. . . . You'll keep wishing the waiting was over."

In significant ways though, Geography 20 was perfectly aligned with who I was and my interests. For one thing, it had no set curriculum, so it drew out the curricular and pedagogical artistry that I hoped then, and continue to hope, that good education can be. Too, growing up, I had collected rocks for many years, and being a rural boy, I was always interested in why saskatoons grew where they did and not in other places, where the rocks came from and why we picked them every spring from the same fields, where the little stream that flowed through one of our pastures came from, what the moon and stars were made of, and what the evening clues in the sky about tomorrow's weather were. So I developed a course around "The Ground We're On." It was physical geography—what goes on in and on Planet Earth that we share. It was very tactile, involving a number of artifacts that students brought to the classroom as well as field trips around the schoolyard and to Fish Creek Park, and a two-day trip to Kananaskis Country to learn about mountain geography. Despite the apparent reputation of the class, I was very excited about it.

My orientation to the school a week earlier had been a stern affair. The principal had invited all six new teachers to the school to what had been dubbed a "Welcome." It was actually a very fear-filled experience, with amazingly little about learning and students and much about how the school's reputation for good order and discipline was being established and what our role as teachers was in perpetuating it. It could easily have been dubbed "Conditions for Not Wearing Out Your Welcome." The number one temptation of new teachers, we were informed, is that they want to be friends with students: "You are not their friend. You are their teacher. And my best advice to you is

that you not smile until Christmas." I'd heard about such things in university, even experienced one or two teachers like that, but never imagined that such a limited relational horizon could continue to exist in the early 1970s, particularly in an urban high school. But there it was, in the middle of my idealism. To be fair, the winds of change were blowing, and the principal was proud that the experiment to replace bells with classical music to mark school time had contributed to "a friendlier atmosphere."

The Welcome session itself though was far from welcoming. It included a lot about classroom control and command-and-control processes for dealing with problems, when to send students to the office and when to take them, when parents would be involved, and so forth. And then there were the zero-tolerance policies, one of which involved coming to school drunk. This policy came quickly to mind at the beginning of the last class during my first week of teaching Geography 20.

Ian[440] comes[441] in during a slow roll call as I am trying to match faces with names. His face is easy to remember because it is ashen white, and, to recall Levinas, "The face speaks. The manifestation of the face is already discourse." And "discourse is . . . the experience of something absolutely foreign, . . . a *traumatism of astonishment*."[442] I ask him if he is okay. He slurs something about an upset stomach. A student in the front row says quietly, "I think he's drunk." I don't want to believe it. As well, I am quite naïve about such things. I simply tell him to lay his head down on his desk. There is, however, to be no denying and no naïveté or innocence, not on his part or mine. Ian threw up. The sight of his liquid lunch being launched to cover the table in front of him, the startled scream of a girl as the projectile hit her back, the rancid smell, the awful sound, Ian's face in shades of grey and pink—partly, I presume, physiological and partly embarrassment—the astonishment of two dozen sets of eyes staring at Ian. Then, in the dead silence as the trauma dawns, nervous glances at me, wondering how I will react.

This was not covered in the principal's welcome. Drunkenness was, but not this. My instincts take over. After a little more silence I ask one student to accompany Ian to

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[440] A pseudonym.

[441] I am using present tense here intentionally as a signifier of how defining moments may work in memory to hold both an "already" and a "not yet" together.

[442] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 43.

the infirmary and to tell the nurse that Ian is sick and needs to lie down. I send a second student to the janitor's office to ask a janitor to come immediately. The girl whose clothes have been violated, after muttering something to Ian about being a pig, asks to change into her gym clothes. I ask the class to follow me outside for fresh air while the janitor cleans up, and I ask the janitor to send those who return from their errands to find us outside.

As we sit under a tree, it's difficult to feel the warm September sun. I feel incredibly awkward. I confess to the class that "I really don't know what to do with this." It is obvious that they know well the zero-tolerance policy for drunkenness, and they remind me of what I already know. Everyone knows what this means for Ian, and one declares, "He's done!" A friend of Ian's who knows his father volunteers something about how "his old man will kick him out the house as well." The stakes are raised: "Drunkenness will not be tolerated" for a 16-year-old named Ian translates to "You've run out of places."

I don't really know where my response to this situation came from. Was it my suspicion and the resistance to privilege implicit in "school reputation"? Was it my desire to be a rescuer, or an expression of arrogance or chauvinism that sometimes gathers around representation? Was it a kind of moral impudence in rereading bureaucracy in favor of its victims? Was it that I saw myself in Ian, not really knowing completely why I was there, his trying to drown it one way, my trying to drown it in my idealism? Was it a rereading of "Welcome," a clumsy attempt to transgress the inhumanity that I had felt a week earlier? Was I simply living in a reality that, in their vulnerability, to use Sharon Todd's word's, "teachers and students are more than the predictable sum of their institutionally defined roles"?[443] Was it the sheer wonder wafting through my life, having been married three weeks earlier? Was it a primordial instinct that whatever life arrives, it calls for some sort of presence? Was it that the constructedness of the need to be loved—a.k.a. the need for security, reputation, or whatever—was outweighed by the constructedness of the need to love? Whatever it was, after a little more discussion with

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[443] Todd, *Learning from the Other*, p. 142.

the class about what this would mean for Ian, I asked them to let me handle it. I also asked them, if questions arose either on their part or that of others, to refer them to me.

That afternoon, a little traumatized, I visited with the department head, whom I already trusted because of his help in settling in. He advised me to visit with a particular assistant principal and to lay everything out, along with my desire to work with Ian. The official story that the AP, my department head, a guidance counselor who became involved, and that particular Geography 20 class adopted was that Ian had been sick.

The journal that I kept that first year of teaching tells of an unfolding relationship with Ian that moves considerably beyond professional interest; that is, interest for the sake of academic success; or, as the principal would have it, Ian's contribution to the reputation of the school; or, as his parents would have it, Ian's upward mobility. It also tells of a unique rapport with that particular class. It was easily my favorite that year, I think because the class had become a kind of "community of truth" in its vulnerability to take Ian seriously without excluding him.[444]

As our trust grew, Ian told me a horrendous story of physical and emotional abuse in his home. And as the tough exterior slowly melted, he revealed that most of his teen years had been spent trying to stave off failure. In the eyes of his father, he was hopeless. I later met his parents, and they thanked me for "supporting Ian." His dad was deeply disappointed in him, and I detected a certain embarrassment about Ian's academic performance. Ian was good at working with wood, and he responded eagerly to invitations to work on a number of projects with me. His first project was a sluice box to study how water erosion works. He volunteered to make a wind tunnel that we used for studying clouds and cloud formation, and he participated in a number of smaller projects. He was a player on the junior varsity volleyball team that I coached. Mutual respect grew, and teaching him became an excuse for friendship.

I don't know all of the dynamics, but, looking back, I never cease to be traumatized too by the traumatism of astonishment in the faces of an AP, a department head, and 23 Others. Despite the myth of sacrifice that would have allowed his expulsion

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[444] Palmer, *To Know as We are Known*, p. 95.

without anyone, including me, noticing, there was something else present: a primordial hope for something beyond the intolerable in Ian's life.

When I left public education, the same AP who knew the full story about Ian's drunkenness commented that Geography 20 had become a live option for students rather than a course of last resort. He also informed me that my actions had risked my career and forced great risk on him, but that he was glad to have shared in it. I like to think that Ian's gift was a part of a genuine learning environment that had developed in Geography 20, beyond five credits, beyond physical geography, to the possibility that earth and Other could be taken seriously, however they arrived. Even if there was no contribution at the curricular level, there emerged the growing realization that beauty dwells beyond the ordered life that is somehow supposed to uphold reputations. I learned early on that the seemingly strange obscurity of making friends in obscurity is not a particularly obscure quest. And the wisdom of Levinas lingers: "This absolutely foreign alone can instruct us."[445] There is a place for Other already, it would seem, in the Otherness of my life as a teacher.

Pedagogy is not about creating a world in my own image, but rather, as David Jardine says, "to be open to what we cannot imagine by ourselves."[446] Holding the door open for the vulnerabilities of the entanglements that arrive with the Stranger, including fear and other voices of the night, becomes the very connections of who we are together in a human community. If the human self is not an autonomous, independent agent but is always and necessarily preceded by a "Thou" (Buber) or "alterity" (Levinas), then "who I am" is no longer just about me, nor the confining social definitions of *us-ness* and *them-ness* that oscillate within the very structures of modernism as the basis for pegging and other mastery within European history. If those who are radically Other are the ones who evoke, summon, authorize, and faith persons into existence instead of applying methods and techniques for the purposes of predictability and control, my heeding of Their presence may be an invitation to be *with* and *for* rather than *over*. For I can neither escape

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[445] Ibid.

[446] From a conversation with David Jardine in a graduate seminar on Hans-Georg Gadamer, Faculty of Education, University of Calgary, Winter 2005.

from, nor am I able to seduce, capture, or possess, the Stranger who always stands free facing me at my door (Levinas).

The other question that haunts me is this: What becomes of those who, living under policies and prescriptions, simply become the Ians who are neither faced nor encouraged to face Other? I think this is part of the quest to hear Shannon's cry too. To this I turn.

Beyond Words

According to Usher and Edwards, modern education is "founded on the humanist idea of a certain kind of subject who has the inherent potential to become self-motivated and self-directing."[447] Education is about bringing out this potential so that individuals can become fully autonomous and capable of exercising their individual choice, agency, or freedom by providing knowledge and understanding. Education is about bringing a person to reason (preestablished and preexistent).

Understanding the development of Western theological education helps to understand how it has come to adopt precisely the same *telos* in seemingly uncritical ways.[448] Theological education for the last two centuries has privileged thinking about things as its sum and substance, as illustrated in the dominance of the theoretical (biblical studies, church history, and systematic theology). Practical theology, a fourth component, represents the task-oriented programming to acquire the skills of professional ministry. As Ronald F. Thiemann, former dean of Harvard Divinity School, describes it, this theory-practice dichotomy in theological curricula has been part of the growing fissures since the founding of divinity schools and seminaries independent from the university in early 19th-century United States. Prior to that, theological training was an integral part of university education, where faith and piety were parts of the "universe" under

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[447] R. Usher and R. Edwards, *Postmodernism and Education* (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 24-25.

[448] John Drane, "Theological Education for the Next Century." *British Journal of Theological Education*, June 3, 1994-95. This is included in *Cultural Change and Biblical Faith* (Carlyle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2000).

consideration through a double lens of revelation and the natural order.[449] Thiemann explains that the university abandoned theology in the early 19th century with the ascendancy of natural philosophy and natural sciences on the one hand and the growing specialization undergirded by ascendancy of notions of social arrangement arriving out of social science. So "precisely as ministry gained professional status, the intellectual justification for theological education became blurred."[450] In these same epistemic and social currents, questions of faith, piety, commitment, and value became "increasingly alien to *objective* critical studies."[451] Consequently, faith was subsumed by theology, understood within the broad frameworks of natural philosophy, and *knowing about* things replaced *knowing Other*. Dallas Willard observes along similar lines that "the deeper cultural currents within education" are a matter of how, through gradual historical progress, "we have *automatically* come to think of faith removed from Other, as something which is either irrelevant, or as a construction which serves the autonomous consumer." Even "the possibility of Jesus as the actual teacher of his people has disappeared from the mental horizon of faith."[452] As Thiemann puts it, "Theology as an inquiry emerging from faith and piety appears to lack the marks of an impartial and critical discipline."[453] The final separation has come with the "detheologizing"[454] of theological education.

John Drane, a British theological educator, traces similar trajectories. Both conservative and liberal theological studies have remained inside British and continental universities because of the formers' tendency to rationalism and the latters' empirical

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[449] Ronald F. Thurmann, "Making Theology Central in Theological Education," *Christian Century*. February 4, 1987, p. 106. See also James. M. Gustafson (1987), "Priorities in Theological Education," *Theological Education Supplement*, Vol. 23, 69-87.

[450] Ibid.

[451] Ibid.

[452] Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998), p. 316.

[453] Thurman, p. 107.

[454] Ibid., p. 108. See also Fernando F. Segovia, *Teaching the Bible: The Discourses and Politics of Biblical Pedagogy* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998). Segovia documents the way in which some contemporary Catholic theological education operates within a hierarchical system buttressed by the empiricism of higher critical methodology. Here, "teachers, the authorities, imparted knowledge upon passively receptive students, and that this system could turn any student, regardless of sociocultural position or background into a neutral, objective teacher" (p. 4). He also speaks of how this reinforces Europe's colonial worldview whereby "the colonizer saved the colonized by civilizing them through knowledge" (ibid.).

tendency. However, "reductionism continues to be the *sine qua non* for everyone, where things are best understood by taking them apart on the assumption that knowledge about the parts creates knowledge of the whole."[455]

A variety of questions have arisen from these historical trajectories for theological education.[456] None, however, is more important than the question of hospitality in theological education itself: the relational crisis within theological pedagogy, modernistically conceived. Within rationalist paradigms the question becomes a theoretical abstraction: How do we make room for Other?[457] The postmodern question, on the other hand, is this: What is the call of Other already present, now, before me? And if They are, how might I live and teach in Their presence?

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[455] Drane, ibid. Despite recent attempts to introduce the hope of postmodern understandings for theological education (see, for instance, Tom Beaudoin, "Foucault-Teaching-Theology," in *Religious Education*, Winter 2003, in which Beaudoin traces the discourses of power within theological language), evangelical theology remains largely unmoved. See, for instance, D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). (Carson, a leading evangelical theologian, perpetuates the mistaken reading of postmodern understandings, which is the rejection of objective truth as a rejection of truth per se. Postmodernism seems rather to deny certain theories of truth that presuppose a radical subject-object dichotomy and theories of sociopolitical representation that are derived from these particular theories.) The actual theological engagement with the postmodern ethos has arrived in communities of faith who understand their faith in relational rather than propositional terms.

[456] One question is how religion can serve as the voice of resistance, the prophetic voice, within rationalist mode. When Other is eclipsed by the autonomous, rational self, religion easily becomes, as French secularist Alex de Tocqueville once suggested, the first of America's political institutions. Another question is how theological education might be theological within rationalist conceptualizations. Another particularly pertinent question in the face of the resurgence of religious fundamentalisms in the present day is where there might be room for *confessional faith*—faith as it is lived, in education, theological and otherwise. Will the violence that is sometimes embedded in faith expressions simply be regarded as irrational or uncivilized, or will there be a place at the table where conversations on such subjectivities might have a chance?

[457] The 19th-century thinker John Stuart Mill was not an advocate of Christianity. He did, however, point out the effects of presenting the truths of Jesus in such a way as to bypass both the person of faith and the person of Jesus. Mill's sense of the harm done to relationality by failing to elicit a believer's own insight and experience, beyond words, is profound:

> The words of him whose speech was in figures and parables were iron-bound and petrified into inanimate and inflexible *formulae.* Jesus was likened to logician, framing a rule to meet all cases, and provide against all possible evasions, instead of [one] . . . whose object was to unify and spiritualize the mind, so that, under the guidance of its purity, its own lights might suffice to find the law of which he only supplied the spirit, and suggested the general scope. . . . [Hence,] religion, instead of a spirit pervading the mind, becomes a crust encircling it, nowise penetrating the obdurate mass within, but only keeping out such rays of precious light or genial heat as might haply have come from elsewhere. (John Stuart Mill, "On Genius," in John M. Robson and Jack Stillinger, Eds., *Autobiography and Literary Essays.* (Toronto, ON: Toronto University Press, 1981, p. 337; as cited in Willard, fn. 2, p. 415)

Theological education in modernist manifestation is problematic because of its preoccupation with self-certitude as the embodiment of truth and justice at the expense of Other. Evangelical education has distorted the Reformation maxim of "faith alone" by transforming faith into the self-referential notion of a logically consistent biblical text as the metaphysical scaffolding for a philosophically incontestable God. *The faith*, propositionally understood, as mentioned above, is exclusionary in that it reduces humanness to rationality. The influence of this understanding of pedagogy might best be described using Paulo Freire's notion of "the banker's model."[458] Pedagogy in a world of propositional truth is largely about "information transfer." There can be discussion, but in the end, "You need to understand [comply with, consent to, agree with, say in this way, etc.] this [notion, proposition, formula, etc.]." Much can be said about critical thinking, but it is easily reduced to thinking like I think. In other words, learning is reduced to "Listen up!" Information transfer however, to follow Freire's accounting, is not an innocent, neutral activity, but a "domesticating factor" that contributes to indifference or apathy by collapsing all meaning to that of the pedagogue. The world becomes foreign, and people and communities become powerless to act against oppression in the conditions of life in which they find themselves. Communities have no vocabulary that valorizes their own oppression.[459] In addition, the range of resources available is restricted to rationalistic ones, responses themselves to those that can be rationalized within certain "regimes of truth" (Foucault). A pedagogy of hospitality will seek to include Other in the richness of who s/he is and to receive him/her as something more than a disembodied brain with specified performance skills. As British educator John Drane puts it, "Theological education that focuses on the mind would seem to have restricted the Great Commandment to one quarter of its possibilities. The invitation to love is with body, soul, and spirit too."[460]

Given the tendency to think of its faith in terms of a system of beliefs, it is not surprising that Protestant Christianity has unfolded relationally as the story of drawing

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[458] Freire (1970), p. 72.

[459] Paulo Freire (1970), pp. 47ff.

[460] John Drane (1994-1995), "Theological Education for the Next Century," *British Journal of Theological Education*, Vol. 6, No. 3.

exclusionary fence lines around one kind of incontestable God or another, all constructed by words. This stands in stark contrast to the story of the first followers of the Way of Jesus. Their story was not one of how people might acquire more adequate or compelling evidence or more consistent arguments; rather, it is a story of a Way of death and resurrection that was intrinsically ridiculous.[461] But it is a story in which people found themselves, not through great metaphysical discourses or ideological resources, but through passionate response to the gentle call of Other already present, *known* prior to *being known about.*[462] The consequence of this knowing was a grassroots community of compassion.[463] Contemporary evangelical theological education continues to promote faith as an incontestability based on propositions and words. In the process it molds learners into a culture of regimented self-sufficiency to become masters of the Stranger within and the Stranger without, of various discourses, and of what can be recollected. In preventing the fragmentation, heartache, and messiness that constitutes life, it severs the faith of Other. Indeed, Other is reduced to a boundaried word, a torah, about Other for the sake of fitting in. In the process, Other ceases to be a disruption, and the hope of fitting together is obliterated too.[464]

The ethical stakes in this are high, and the discussions around ethical education are pertinent to the theological. As Sharon Todd points out, if our relationship with Other is a question of knowledge, then the question of ethics is the question of "What do we need to know in order to live well together?"[465] The implicit hope in this question is that

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[461] As Paul puts it, "to Greeks foolishness" and "to Jews, a stone of stumbling" (I Corinthians 1:23).

[462] Paul may be speaking of this in Ephesians 4:17-20. Paul is warning against the kind of life that is lived in the "futility of the mind (Gr. *nous*)," which darkens understanding, fosters ignorance and hardness of heart, and leads to greed and self-centeredness. Then he says, "That ["living in the futility of the mind"] is not the way you learned Christ!" This is a striking way of saying that there is more to the Christian faith than what may be 'learned about' it. As Marcus Borg points out, in Jesus' tradition (Judaism), there was a relational quality to knowing (*Jesus* [San Francisco: Harper, 2006], p. 115f.). In Levinasian terms, the face of Other is prior to knowledge.

[463] It was said of them that "there was not a needy person among them" (Acts 4:34).

[464] John Harris (2003), "Assessment of Ministry Preparation to Increase Understanding," *Theological Education*, Vol. 39, No. 2. In a study conducted for Mundelin Seminary (Roman Catholic), Harris ties theological students' experience of spiritual intimacy to their experience of communal closeness in a symmetrical relationship. He also observes that these experiences are more challenging protestant education, given the comparative lack of emphasis for living in community in the latter (pp. 128-129).

[465] Sharon Todd (2001), "On Not Knowing the Other, or Learning from Levinas," *Philosophy of Education*. Retrieved May 11, 2008, from www.ed.uiuc.edu/eps/PES-Yearbook/2001/todd%2001.pdf

the more we know about Others, the better we are able to understand how to respond to them and how to be more responsible. Pedagogy in this instance falls into a form of rhetoric, "an influential device for getting students to learn about how people come to be designated as Other and what needs to be done to change this."[466] She goes on to say that "it is this rhetorical dimension of education that calls into question the ethical benefits of learning *about* Others; for if educators seek to persuade, convert, or cajole students into adopting certain attitudes, no matter how desirable those attitudes may be, then is education performing the very violence it is seeking to remedy? Is it committing a violence by not engaging students as distinct subjects of difference?"[467] If, on the other hand, our relationship with Other is a question prior to knowledge of the face of Other facing me already, here and now, then the ethical question is Levinas's question: "What relation to the Other is necessary in order for knowledge to be possible?"[468]

Teaching and learning in the Levinasian sense are conceived as an ethical relation, not because of some prescriptive injunction either moral or theological, but because two distinct persons are face to face. For Levinas, teaching and learning, like relationality itself, lie in the "insurmountability of the duality of beings."[469] As Sharon Todd explains, "The Other signifies a limitless possibility for the self, and it is by coming face to face with such limitlessness that the self can exceed its own containment, its own self-identity, breaking the solitude of being for the self."[470] Here, "teaching is only possible if the self is open . . . to the face of the Other. Through such openness to what is exterior to the I, the I can become something different than, or beyond, what it was." In short, I can learn.[471] For Levinas, the question of Other is not a question. Other is prior to knowledge, so there can never be knowledge *about* abstracted in words, only knowing the Other already, here before me.

As I have thought about this question and the distancing of Other that is imbricated within theological pedagogies in the West, I wonder whether I have thought

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[466] Ibid.
[467] Ibid.
[468] Ibid.
[469] Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, p. 67. As cited in Todd, *Learning from the Other*, p. 30.
[470] Todd, ibid.
[471] Ibid.

too much about it. This was driven home to me two days ago as I visited with Rob[472] in the palliative care unit at a local hospital. I had worked with Rob for many years, and we had become good friends. This morning he died. *Visit* is a strange word, usually about the exchange of words, but very few words were passed between us as he lay on his bed. And the words that we spoke were very soft and to some extent indiscernible because of poor hearing. But these words, gentle hand squeezes, and a couple of faint smiles were all that interrupted his sleep. It seemed important for me to say words, possibly because I'm still recovering from being a heroic problem solver. So I said a couple of short prayers, and a few things that I thought might be comforting. His acknowledgements came when I spoke, but at other times as well. It was these latter that made me wonder how important my words really were. It seemed that the shared silence was enough. An orderly rushed in at one point, "doing rounds," and interrupted our communal solitude—really, just breathing together. I was glad he acknowledged Rob and talked to him, though I wondered why he was so loud in announcing, "You haven't drunk much." Rob scowled and whispered something about "trying to rest." Was it that he wanted some sort of normalcy for Bill, acquired with some prescriptive pill with which health care seems largely equated? Was life only possible when lived in active voice? Whatever the case, it was clear that in these particular moments, life was beyond every formulation of rushing rounds and instant prescriptions. No words seemed adequate here either. In the passive restlessness of the unresolved moment of brokenness and pain, presence was enough. And "trying to rest" was perhaps the highest spiritual call to let life be willed in the mysterious, wonderous, everydayness of this moment, rather than willing something momentous.

In theological contexts the cultivation of spirituality or spiritual formation is only more recently being discovered as being related to presence or shared silence.[473] It is usually thought of as the cultivation of disciplines, practices, habits, and ways of seeing and knowing "that make us attentive and responsive to the presence of God's living

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[472] A pseudonym.

[473] Richard Foster notices that there are few living masters of contemplative prayer in the Protestant world, and that most of the texts for Christian teaching on meditation are seven or more centuries old. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth.* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 14.

Spirit."[474] Spirituality for the first followers of Christ, as Bonnie Thurston points out, was recognizable by specific practices that were a fitting response elicited from a world graced already with "the presence of God." This spirituality, similar to that of Buddhism, is focused on the presence of Other, and is never something to be attained or to take pride in.[475] This is a challenge to many notions of spirituality as one more human interest, divided out, mere fragments of human activity that easily conflate to technique or therapy,[476] which it tends to become under the Western episteme. If spirituality were only a matter of what I *do* in response to Other, then a focus on practices would suffice. But if it is the face of Other that draws me, prior to thought, then something much more is going on beyond my thinking and doing. It is even beyond what I interpret and is therefore beyond theological discourse and ideology. It is beyond imagination and even hopes and desires. Yet it is right before me already. Being in the presence of Other is beyond words. Where might this presence be found?

In Levinasian terms, this presence is not so much in my finding the face of Other as in Other already present before me. In Western spiritual traditions, it is in solitude. In solitude I cease my speaking and doing. I enter stillness, to be available to the possibility of knowing beyond words.[477] This is solitude: to be available with Other. There are no formulas here, other than the cessation of words to create space and time for Other. In pedagogical contexts this might involve having students close their eyes, to sit with a

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[474] Stanley P. Saunders, "Learning Christ: Eschatology and Spiritual Formation in the New Testament," *Interpretation*, April 1, 2002.

[475] Bonnie Thurston, "A Christian's Appreciation of the Buddha," *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 19.1 (1999), pp. 121-128. See also "Zen in he Eye of Thomas Merton's Poetry" *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 4 (1984), pp. 103-117.

[476] The notion of a *therapeutic culture* was developed by Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966); also in *Charisma: The Gift of Grace* (New York: Pantheon Publishing, 2007). Rieff (d. 2006) was a social philosopher who examined the impact of Freudian (1966) and Weberian (2007) enthronement of self-esteem, self-authentication, and self-fulfillment in an emerging "cult of self-worship" in Western culture. The central question in his writing had to do with the social and ethical implications of the emptying of the world of faith in what we treasure beyond us; that is, "the sacred." The reduction of faith to psychology and ethics to self-management is, he claimed, not only the negation of wonder able to call us beyond, but also the reduction of the world to "my size" so that the world can serve me. As Rieff put it, "Religious man was born to be saved, psychological man is born to be pleased." Community itself collapses under the consumer demand to be a "pleasure commodity" to serve me rather than an invitation to walk together beside others. Or if I do walk beside you, it will be only while you meet my needs.

[477] The writer of the 46th Psalm points to this possibility in relating stillness and knowing: "Be still and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10.

reading of a text, to allow the arrival of what is beyond words. Such an interruption might proffer the gift of shared silence, a communal moment of truth, where together we experience trust and the simple goodness of simply being together. Or when a student makes a presentation in which they have invested much and the epiphanies have arrived, sometimes completely unexpectedly, to cease speaking rather than rushing to respond. Solitude can be the space in which Other arrives.

Solitude is about my own unknowing as well, particularly in the presence of the daily requirements of compassion and in inviting students into the Way of compassion. I think that as long as I am preoccupied with my own desire to express hospitality, but am not able to feel the presence of the Other facing me, my hospitality remains hanging halfway between my mind and my hands, and doesn't extend to the heart of the one I want to be open to where healing and connection has an opportunity to unfold. In solitude, my own heart can take off its many protective devices, and it can grow wide enough that human things become welcome and no longer strange. This last term a student showed up late for class, took off his heavy coat, noisily unpacked his computer, pushed the start button that had connected him to everywhere but here, and sat down. In the middle of it my more normal response would have been anger, attacking insensitivity and/or rude behavior and otherwise dealing with and controlling the situation. It would have been a serious distraction for me and probably for the whole class, but class would have proceeded, even with the emotional "elephant in the room" (anger). Instead, I invited the person who was speaking to stop, and we sat in silence as the disruption unfolded. After he was settled, I said, "I don't know what to do with this." More silence. After another few moments he apologized, and we went on. A week or so later, he shared that another class member had told him that she had come to respect him for his apology. He thanked me for enabling him to see his selfish behavior. Looking back, I realize that it really wasn't my control; it was the silence—in this case, a troubled though caring silence of unknowing—that disrupted the selfish and inconsiderate behavior.[478] I think, or like to

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[478] A pedagogy of hospitality is not about "letting everything go." Rather, it is about embracing Other in mutual arrival. Hannah Arendt captures these two horizons of interpreting self and Other in the communal act that education is:

think, that Other had arrived in my confessed unknowing that turned a disruption into a possible moment of truth about an Other way of doing life together, an awareness that went beyond the bounds of human control. Thomas Merton observes, "It is in deep solitude that I find the gentleness with which I can truly love Others. The more solitary I am the more affection I can have for them. It is pure affection and filled with reverence for the solitude of others. Solitude and silence teach me to love them for who they are, not for what they say."[479] In the space and moment of solitude, hospitable space, and time, learning is not about the acquisition of truth or knowledge or information; it is about wonder and awe. It is about life that is already enough and learning to live in the passive voice. A pedagogy of hospitality is not about an entitled handing down of truths to those who sit under us; rather, it is about facing Other before me, modeling in this faith-filled response in the indeterminate place and time of their showing up, an invitation to life together. Sometimes powerful transformational responses occur when space is made for that which is already present, by sitting together in shared unknowing silence.

When words are spoken in places of theological learning, there are so many voices speaking so loudly. "Prove that!" "Say something useful." "Say something that will make the teacher or others take note." "Say something that will prove myself worthy to a classmate." "Say something profound or interesting." "Say something that proves I've read the text." "What problem is that supposed to solve?" "Say something that will ensure funding for grants, publishing, and advancement." So much gets said because of the rewards of speaking, which become the rewards of our functionality, contribution, and worth—what Thomas Moore calls "the distraction of a clamoring self, our subtle and

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> Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and the young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world. (Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* [London: Penguin Books, 1969], p. 196)

As cited in Jardine, *Under the Tough Old Stars,* p. 145. The question is this: How do we prepare students for renewing a common world filled already with Other rather than ratifying exclusion?

[479] Thomas Merton, *The Sign of Jonas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1953), p. 261. As cited in Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 95.

persistent narcissism."[480] No wonder relationships with Other get stunted, when most of the educational endeavor get spent defining Them, looking for Them, instead of being *with* Them.

I think solitude is so difficult in education because of the demand for efficiency that is always lurking in a vision of life determined by functionality. How can students, particularly college students, be encouraged to develop relationally when the logic of getting ahead by getting it done pervades contemporary postsecondary life? What chance is there for developing a sense of the hospitable self when students feel like "plug and play slot machines,"[481] expected to become functionaries as quickly as possible? This has been a concern of the impacts of industrialization on schooling for generations.[482] As Rebekah Nathan shows, it continues still. In looking at a freshman university experience,[483] students today are looking for the perfect schedule, to get in, get a diploma, and get out with the fewest distractions possible. Deep relationships and contemplative ways get in the way of the good life they anticipate as graduates. Part of this has to do with the economic driver of "short-termism" rampant in the economic order.[484] Time is money, after all. Part of it has to do with an ethos of detachment.[485] For students, intimacy, including worlds of crying and laughter, are sacrificed on the altar of

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[480] Forward to Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Out of Solitude* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2004), p. 11.

[481] The report of a first-year postsecondary student on her/his high school experience.

[482] See, for instance, Walter J. Ong, *Ramus: Method and the Decay of Dialogue* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958). Ong in his time decried the collapse of teaching into method, the victory of the "routine of efficiency" (p. 225).

[483] Rebekah Nathan, *My Freshman Year* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005). As cited in Greg Veltman, "Making the Most of College: Making Friends for Life," *Comment Magazine*, June 2006, Vol. 29, I.6. Retrieved June 10, 2006, from http://www.wrf.ca/comment/article.cfm?ID=198

[484] Jonathan M. Wellum, "Short-Termism" and Some Significant Challenges to the Capital Markets." Remarks prepared for Wellum's inauguration as Senior Fellow of the Work Research Foundation, September 14, 2006. Retrieved September 21, 2006, from www.wrf.ca/fellows. Wellum cites the concerns of leading economists, ethicists, investor-relations specialists, and financial executives to demonstrate the destructive power of obsession with short-term results. He asks, "Have we adopted economist John Maynard Keynes's tongue-in-cheek view concerning the long-term when he said, 'In the long-run we are all dead'?" Originally in Barton Biggs, *Hedge Hogging* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2006), p. 292.

[485] See Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Love* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), p. 38f. Bauman examines how Western people have come to see themselves as *homo consumens* rather than *homo faber* when it comes to relationships and community. The commitment in the West is to "connect" or "network" loosely so that relationships can be untied quickly. "The community based on ethical economies beyond self, living for the other, . . . fastening and servicing inter-human bonds," has been replaced by an ethic of freedom or liquidity (p. 74).

efficiency. Students suffer from what Michael Flynn's band Slow Runner calls being "Streamlined."[486] Nathan shows that, for many, college is marked by the experience of dissolving relationships. It is difficult to see how it could be otherwise, given that remaining objective, autonomous, and detached is the dominant ethos of university life. Why wouldn't relational infantalization be the result of rational autonomy?

There are clearly other temporal logics at play here that David Loy explores. Loy suggests that our desire to make every minute valuable inscribes our lives with busyness. "The fact that we never seem to have enough of it [time] points to a bigger predicament, that we *can't* ever have enough of it." This is because the false distinction between time and me creates a desperation to fill the sequence that is the result of the commodification of time. An important alternative to this is to enter into the "nonduality of me and time." This nonduality led Zen Master Dogen to coin the phrase *uji* ("being time").[487] Suffice it

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[486] Veltman, ibid.

> Now loneliness is so refined
> It's streamlined
> I sleep through doors, I pass the time
> Streamlined
> I want to be weighted down
> Tangled up
> In the thorns of love
> But this year I ended up
> Streamlined
> All extra weight
> I've left behind
> between the rain
> beneath the signs
> I want to be
> Tangled up
> Weighted down
> Lost and found
> Cause these days I
> Just walk around
> Streamlined

[487] D. Loy (2000), "The Spiritual Origins of the West: A Lack Perspective," *International Philosophical Quarterly, 40*(2), 215-233. See also *The Nature of Lack*, a series of talks that are parts of chapters in *Money, Sex, War, Karma: Notes for Buddhist Revolution* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2008). Retrieved May 20, 2008, from http://ww.zen_occidental.net/articles//loy14-eng.html. This false distinction is also shadowed in the Gospel narratives of the New Testament, where the word for time by sequence is *chronos*, and the word for time by relational opportunities or gifts is *chairos*. What is on offer within both the Buddhist and early Christian understandings is life lived, not in the anxiety of mad sequence, but in the "being time"; that is, with the possibility of "considering the lilies" whose beauty is unrelated to production time. *Lilies are* (Matthew 6:28).

to say that the connection between loving and knowing, living and knowing, being and knowing are lost to a world of abstraction where "no blood flows," where the strange but omnipresent tangledness of life, its pain, its joy, its weight and lightness, its lostness and foundness, not to mention the voices of the night, are swallowed up in an episteme that is underwritten by a history without depth. A pedagogy of hospitality affirms life, including the tangles that make life life, within that nearly impossible temporal tension of the ever-present yet-to-come that involves seeing beyond what I will, to what and Who I am already present to.

The solitude where Other already faces me and where I am already embraced and valued for breathing, where no one is keeping accounts, retangles life and passes it beyond the functionality of my speaking and doing. Henry Nouwen says that "without a lonely place our lives are in danger."[488] What puts us at risk is that if we do not know we are beloved in our solitude, we will expect someone in the community to make us feel beloved. They cannot. All they can see are our words and our work, so they praise and affirm us for them. Slowly, we come to depend on them, possessive of the sense of self-identification they carry. Relationships turn toxic as the need for affirmation increases. When it is not forthcoming, it is experienced as betrayal, and people who are friends become enemies. In solitude "we can slowly unmask the illusion of our possessiveness" and discover a new imaginary in the center of our own self, not constituted by what we can solve or cure or the responses that such heroism elicits, but "what is given us."[489] This requires an expectation beyond psychology, a spiritual point of view away from the clamoring voices. In solitude we can hear the voice of Other who spoke to us before we could speak a word. We hear that our worth is not our usefulness. Solitude strips us of the illusions based on conquest.[490] In solitude we discover that our life is not a possession to

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[488] Ibid., p. 18.

[489] Ibid., p. 25.

[490] Nouwen tells the Tao story about a carpenter, his apprentice, and an old tree. The carpenter and his apprentice were walking together through a large forest, and when they came across a tall, huge, gnarled, beautiful old oak tree, the carpenter asked his apprentice, "Do you know why this tree is so tall, so huge, so gnarled, so old and beautiful?" The apprentice looked at his master and said: "No, . . . why?" "Well," the carpenter said, "because it is useless. If it had been useful it would have been cut long ago and made into tables and chairs, but because it is useless it could go grow so tall and so beautiful that you can sit in its shade and relax."

be defended, but a gift to be shared. It is there that we discover the healing words that may be possible because they finally are what they are—gifts.[491] Somewhere we know that "without silence words lose their meaning, that without listening words no longer heal, . . . that without a lonely place our actions quickly become empty gestures."[492] On the other hand, the more I am able to see my "belovedness," the more expansive and mysterious I see the belovedness of sisters and brothers in the human family.

Living out of solitude does not mean renouncing humanity in some sort of solipsistic withdrawal from the world.[493] Although such a thing can happen,[494] the great traditions of solitude and contemplation resist this. As the unknown author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* invites, "A soul that is wholly given to contemplation does . . . everything it can to make all men [*sic*] as whole as itself."[495] Similarly, St. Anthony of Egypt (252-356), the pioneer of the desert movement, emphasized that both our life and our death are with our neighbor.[496] Thomas Merton, who was regularly under pressure to "do something useful," explained that solitude is most relevant, that it embraces the world in "silence," "listening," and "questioning," humbly and courageously, "what the world ignores about itself—both good and evil." In solitude, I experience the brokenness, the emptiness, the lack of authenticity, the quest for fidelity, the lostness of contemporary people, as a disorientation. I can begin to face "the worst and discover in it hope of the best. From darkness comes light. From death, life. From the abyss there comes,

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[491] Ibid., p. 26.

[492] Ibid., p. 18.

[493] A common misconception about the contemplative life is that it is not functional or useful. A clergy friend of mine whom I would regard as fully engaged in contemplative ministry spends a good part of her workday praying. She told me about a recent annual performance review in which she was told that she needed to be a better steward of her time and spend more time on setting up programs and less on personal devotional time. When she asked why, she was told that it wasn't part of her "job description."

[494] Some of the desert fathers (e.g., Simon Styletus) and the later European notions of solitude have elitist and narcissistic tendencies. Much contemporary 'new-age' spirituality also tends in this direction. In marked contrast, wisdom traditions regard solitude as a resource of self-giving to neighbor and world.

[495] Ira Progoff, Trans., *The Cloud of Unknowing* (New York: Delta, 1989), ch. 25. This is written by one who names himself "Dionysius the Areopagite" in c. 500 CE; 350 years later it reemerged in the court of Charlemagne in a translation by John Scotus Erigesna and subsequently influenced the European mystic tradition. The first English translation was written in the 14th century.

[496] Benedicta Ward, *Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection* (London: Mowbrays, 1975), p. 2.

unaccountably, the mysterious gift of the Spirit sent by God to make all things new."[497] He says, "We share with one another the creative work of living in the world to serve it. Solitude is not isolation or even "stoic quiet by abstracting [oneself] from material things." It is, rather, an "active response," "fidelity to life itself and to God Who gives Himself to us through our daily contacts with the material world."[498] The world is healed as it is embraced in oneself. Healing for others cannot go on for long unless one "is in contact with the springs of spiritual life which are hidden in the depths of one's own soul."[499]

Being beloved arrives in the absence of Other, when I have nothing useful to say or do, in solitude. We have much to learn from outside the West on this, for "the Way is beyond language."[500] Similarly, Merton observes, "The deepest level of communication is not communication, but communion. It is wordless. It is beyond words, it is beyond speech, and it is beyond concept. Not that we discover a new unity. We discover an older unity. My dear brothers, we are already one. But we imagine that we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are."[501] Dwelling with the Beloved, for the Beloved, births relational identities that no longer depend on success and failure. A's in theology are pure abstraction: "Your identity is that you are the Beloved." It is growth in this mindfulness, where the weapons of inner space, identities based on control, impulse, anxiety, and the delusion of having the right word or effort, can be slowly neutralized and the possibilities "for true openness for all creation, cultures, and all religions becomes possible.[502] So the unknown author writes, "That what I am Lord, I offer unto You, without any looking to any quality of Your being, but only that You are as You are, without any more."[503] These tensions are particularly important

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[497] Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer* (New York: Image Books, 1992), pp. 27-28.
[498] Thomas Merton, *Love and Living* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), pp. 135-149.
[499] Ibid. See also Thomas Merton, *The Silent Life* (New York: Noonday, 1978), p. 167.
[500] Hsin Hsin Ming, *On Trust in the Heart* (Seoul, Korea: Lotus Lantern, n.d.), p. 21.
[501] Thomas Merton, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1975), p. 308.
[502] Ibid. See also Thomas Merton, *Life and Holiness* (Garden City, NY.: Doubleday, 1990), pp. ix-x.
[503] Emilie Griffin (Editor). *The Cloud of Unknowing,* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), p. 34. These were the writings of an anonymous English monk in the 14th C. CE. He understood that "If you are to experience God or to see Him (sic) at all,…it must be in this cloud and in this unknowing." P. 14.

in theological education, because they form "the basis of the Christian life,"[504] which is a Way of relating, not a system of beliefs. There is authentic liberty in this as well, for "I will" is not obedience to the call of Other before me. "Let life be willed through me," is.

This project began with an interruption, a question that continues to be a quest: "Why do I feel so far from God? I'm getting straight A's in theological studies, yet never have I felt so far from God. I just want to know Him! But I think so much about Him, sometimes I just want to scream!" It has been a disturbing interruption, an arrival that has nourished Other arrivals, as interruptions tend to do. Early in this project to discover whether there might be a place for Other in the pedagogies that have guided Western theological education, I encountered the onset of Menière's condition. I lost my natural balance and the hearing in one ear. Initially, there were adaptations, the biggest one being that I had to create space in my life—theologically, "Sabbath"—to cut the stress that had finally caught up to me. Initially, there were also questions that swirled around emerging life, among other things, around denial and apathy ("Now what?"), bitterness ("Why did this happen?"), self-pity and entitlement ("Why me?"), and fear ("What is to become of me?"). But slowly I began to see these things as carrying their own gifts. I am, I think, becoming a better listener, having to focus on who is facing me. And to keep from falling down, I am dependent on my eyes' ability to see something, anything, stationary outside of me. On dark nights walking depends on the presence of someone to touch. It does me little good to reflect upon otherness (philosophy) or to imagine otherness (aesthetics). Other is prior to these. And it is Other, present, with me, for me, that keeps me on my feet. Literally, what keeps me from falling physically to the ground is a lived, interdependent relationship.[505] So this has been one of the great conversions in my life too, from domesticating life to its reductions under my control, to facing the Other who shows up, from believing that unexpected events are disturbing interruptions, to embracing them as the very means by which my heart might become more spacious. In

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[504] Ibid.

[505] This is a basic tenet of Levinas's approach in which relations are prior to impersonal "systems" of signs or discursive practices that put "in question the world possessed." See *Otherwise than Being*, pp. 173-174. See also Susan A. Handelman, *Fragments of Redemption* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 221-223.

opening doors to Other, hope unfolds. In leaving them closed is the unbearable violence of abstraction.

The promise of a pedagogy of hospitality lies beyond my perfect plans and orderly world, my domestications of life and relationships through my illusionary pegging and incontestable truths, beyond the abstractions of ethical arrangements, beyond the instrumentalities of institutional procedures. Other *is* before me, now as ever in Their face, facing me, there to be discovered, not in the momentous, but in the moment, in the sweet strangeness of everyday, indeterminate, unresolved, intimate presence.

AFTERWORD

No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection...
No set of goals and objectives includes everything. . . .
We cannot do everything
And there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.
Oscar Romero[506]

The quest to explore how the study of Other could leave one feeling distanced and disintegrated is by nature incomplete. This is the nature of hermeneutical exploration: Understanding arises from a "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer), between persons, texts, and things. Such a fusion can arise only in the unfolding moment of hospitable encounter. So the quest remains open.

Too, on an ethical level, Other requires that my knowledge remain incomplete. Other is prior to knowing. While I may see the face of Other before me, whatever knowing there may be is in the arrival, the unfolding of possible friendship. There are no grounds of knowing other than the face of Other before me. Gadamer rightly points out that "the idea of an absolute reason is not a possibility," for reason "is not its own master."[507] The unmediated, grounded knowledge (*episteme*) that Plato envisioned is not to be had. So there is an Other side to everything, some (most?) of which I do not see, whether deliberately, unintentionally, by the particularity of my own situatedness, or by the scope of inquiry, also situated within particular epistemological conditions and ways of constructing sightlines. Some of these I am more or less aware of, others I am blind to,

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[506] Oscar Romero, "A Future Not Our Own," 1980. Romero was Archbishop ob El Salvador. He sided with poor, helping them to pronounce their reality, the violence and poverty that were the conditions of their life. conditions of violence and poverty were perpetuated in their midst. He was assassinated in 1980 by death squads originating with the ruling National Republican Party.

[507] Gadamer (1989), p. 276.

and others are in the process of change in the unfolding of relationships. This is the gift, bearing both pain and joy, that living hospitably brings. The humble recognition of my situation as a knower, culturally, historically, and linguistically mediated, is not then a problem to be overcome. It is rather an invitation to awe, wonder, and respect, to heed the call of Other before me. It holds hope and despair together in journey called life.

There are also here a number of questions about hospitality that invite further exploration, particularly in relation to pedagogy. First, while it is clear that hospitality as openness to whoever shows up, however, whenever, involves openheartedness, it is not altogether clear how open doors and open hearts unfold together. Yet they must, as Christina Pohl shows. For an open door without an open heart can be both dehumanizing and compulsive. To put all the emphasis on an open door falls prey in pragmatic Western culture to desertion of the particular in preference for the efficient quick fix of professional, institutional expertise in order to keep a safe distance, providing cure without care and perpetuating the disconnection, so characteristic of Western relationality.[508] I think that there is much more that could be interfaced here in the work of Nel Noddings. I am particularly interested in the way in which she draws together constellations of practical virtues around care (sympathy, receptivity, attentiveness, patience, etc.) to speak to this problem. For "caring about is empty if it does not culminate in caring relations."[509] So I think that the warmhearted practice of hospitality could be served in even more robust ways by considering related virtues such as courage, patience, surrender or letting go, and so forth. Of course, the authentic practice of hospitality as a practical virtue I think will continue to be found in reflective, everyday practices of solitude. Intimacy with Other is more promising when it is held lightly.

Second, to extend the above, I think that other practices need to be nested with solitude, especially in theological education. Although I agree that the inclusion of spaces for Other through discoveries of solitude in theological pedagogy serves to liberate from the distraction of the clamoring self, I also agree with Henri Nouwen that solitude is

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[508] This is the tragic irony of the hospitality industry in the west, that its economic success is due to absence of openness to strangers in strange places

[509] Noddings, 2002, p. 23-4.

probably better seen as part of a movement nested with community and service.[510] While I am not as convinced as Nouwen that these are a sequenced movement—that is, from solitude to community to service—the three are interrelated. They can all both express and bear wholeness. An exploration of all of these in both Eastern and Western monastic traditions would also further balance the ascendancy of the *logos* in Western protestant theological tradition, which has produced the disaster of reducing faith to a system of beliefs, things we know about but don't really know. However, paradoxically, our connectedness and our being beloved are experienced beyond our saying and doing, when our lives become spacious through solitude.

Third, seeing the world as a place of hospitality, where persons are served as guests even as they serve as hosts and stewards, is an important understanding in ecopedagogy as it seeks a mindfulness of the living interdependencies we share in a finite world. Seeing the world as a desacralized, static thing, like a wound-up clock left to tick down or as something that was put in place to be ruled over or dominated by persons, renders it something to be objectified, commodified, and exploited. At the heart of the ecological crisis, according to Morris Berman, is the "progressive disenchantment" of the cosmos in Western ways of seeing it. Rather than being a direct participant, relationally tied to a personal cosmos, sharing breath, water, earth, and food, Western people have become alienated observers: "I am not my experiences, and therefore I'm not really a part of the world around me." The result is a total reification: "Everything is object, alien, not-me; and I am ultimately an object too, an alienated thing in a world of equally unrelated things, with no place and no belonging."[511] This fissure, in which Western education has had considerable complicity, is reflective of the fissure that fences off some of the very resources of environmental and relational healing, the experience of the spiritual in the disruptive, not-knowing life of inbetweens.[512] The picture of a static world that can be

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[510] See especially Henri Nouwen, *Out of Solitude,* 1974.

[511] Morris Berman, *The Reenchantment of the World,* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 15-16.

[512] Joan Halifax says that this objectification of the world is how in Western education we learn to "deal" with the world instead of to bear healing. It is through rites of passage where "extensive subjectivities can be valorized and active participation relationships, communities and environment can occur. "Learning as initiation: Not Knowing, Bearing Witness and Healing," In Steven Glazer, Editor. *The Heart of Learning: Spirituality in Education.* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 1999), p. 176.

objectified, commodified, and marketed leads John Wellwood to say, "We can no longer afford the luxury of a spirituality that is separate from the world. . . . Human life on this planet can survive and prosper only if there is a radical shift in consciousness. We need to realize that the purpose of being here is not to conquer and control, but to serve something larger than ourselves: life itself and our fellow beings."[513] It is not only "the human soul that becomes impoverished when we try to escape the contradiction at the core of our nature," the contradiction between worldly and spiritual life;[514] it is the environment as well. The very necessities of life, air, water, soil, hospitable climate, and so on are threatened by the loss of the ordinariness and daily nature of the sacred that connects to a larger space that reveals the fundamental interconnectedness of life. Spirituality, as Chogyam Trungpa defines it, "is a means of arousing one's spirit, of developing a kind of spiritedness" that allows us "to have greater contact with reality."[515] I don't think there could be a more important understanding than this, to open the meaning and the mandate to be "stewards of creation," handed down in the Abrahamic traditions,[516] and to trouble the binary thinking that has often prevailed in those same traditions.

Fourth, and in related ways, a pedagogy of hospitality seeks a deeper mindfulness of how the world works in the face of the rising tide of economic globalization. Under the current regime of economic globalization, humankind is promised an age of progress and prosperity, if the market is given free reign. As the work of Enrique Dussel and others has shown this myth can unfold only with a privileged position of Europe, which operates with a parallel myth—the myth of sacrifice of Other. Even my own discussion of this has taken place within a certain safety of the West. There is a great need to listen to the voices of Other regarding the impact of globalization. Ghanaian theologian Mercy Amba Oduyoye has, for instance, described how globalization has affected ancient African

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[513] John Welwood, Editor. *Ordinary Magic: Everyday Life as Spiritual Path,* (Boston and London: Shambhalå, 1992), p. xvi.

[514] Ibid.

[515] Chogyam Trungpa, "Theism and Nontheism," in *Speaking of Silence: Christians and Buddhists on the Contemplateive Way*, Edited by Susan Walker (New Yrok: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 152. As in Welwood, ibid.

[516] Genesis 1:28f.

traditions of hospitality. Offering and receiving hospitality is a key indicator of the African emphasis on sustaining the life force at all costs. The impact of globalization in Africa demonstrates just how inept the market is at sustaining life and relations on the planet, operating as it does only through the maintenance of hierarchies and dichotomies (of "developed" versus "undeveloped').[517] In Africa the very capacity for hospitality was expressed for generations within the pooled resources of extended families. Now it is being weakened with the ascendancy of individualism and the nuclear family, driven by the transient labor needs of the global market. Even more unsustainable is the ruining of subsistence agriculture with its often rich biodiversity for the sake of cash crops for export that provide sustainable life and profits for only a few. Mercy Amba Oduyoye writes, "The rest must go hungry, their community dehumanized, and the earth pillaged and the earth polluted. One could sum up all this with the observation that *globalization knows nothing of hospitality*."[518]

The fifth area of potential promise for continued exploration relates to this and has to do with the relationship between religion, spirituality, and consumerism. Given that the diminutions of life outlined above "are always good for the market insofar as they promote new conditions of scarcity,"[519] given that "all value must register within the logic of money and submit itself to the aggression of international money demand,"[520] and given that Anglo-American capitalism is essentially a Protestant Christian phenomenon,[521] every attempt needs to be made to understand just how this version of global economics is an expression of a certain kind of religious and spiritual formation with that phenomenon.[522] Given the complicity of consumer culture in underwriting the

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[517] Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), p. 67.

[518] Ibid., p. 97.

[519] David Geoffrey Smith, *Teaching in Global Times*, (Edmonton: Pedagon Press, 2002), p. 87. Smith draws on the work John McMurtry *Unequal freedoms: The global market as an ethical system*. (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1998). McMurtry says the global market system as arising in the United States and Britain in the last half of the 20th century, "feeds on its dysfunctions as the renewing principle of its advance." This is an "unintended effect that strips the life-world without comprehension of its drive-wheel." McMurtry, p. 365-6, as in Smith, ibid.

[520] Smith, p. 384.

[521] See Max Weber (1958), and R. H. Tawney (1960).

[522] This is particularly important given the pervasive way in which religious understandings have historically been one of the most widespread and effective instruments of legitimation. Certain kinds of

whole unsustainable system, how does the spiritual resistance to say, "Enough!" arise? Can it, especially when evangelical Christianity in North America has become just one more brand to consume along with Gap, Apple, and Starbucks? The issue is further complicated, as Vincent Miller points out, if consumer culture is reflected as Christianity sees itself; that is, as another set of beliefs in conflict with its beliefs, to be marketed accordingly.[523] If, however, consumer culture with its systems of meanings and valuations (Baudrillard) is not simply a set of beliefs, but a way that transforms religious belief and practice by becoming the very meanings within the religious tradition, then consumerism is the religion. This is what makes it possible for me to clothe myself with $12 shirts that I know are made by workers making 20¢ an hour in horrific conditions: In the absence of Other, my consumer behavior dictates my belief structures.

The plight of religion in consumer culture is not just the plight of Christianity; it includes other faiths as well. In July 2008 I was a guest at the opening of the largest mosque in Canada. Over lunch one of the officials of the group affirmed that the site was picked for "location, location, location"; that is, for its visibility. The enormous building is situated beside a large city park with a swimming pool. It is designed "to attract and win" the un-mosqued with a large gymnasium, a banquet hall for weddings or other public and private functions for groups up to 800, and meeting rooms for clubs and other community groups, in addition to the mosque itself, which remains a place of prayer and teaching. Although clerics admittedly struggle to protect the faith from consumeristic influence, ironically, consumerism is inscribed in the faith as it is unfolding. Where religious affiliation is a matter of choice, religious organizations compete for members.

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religious expression are able, it seems to relate empire's precarious reality constructions, with religions ultimate claims. See Peter Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion.* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1973), p. 41f.

[523] Vincent Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practise in a Consumer Culture.* (New York: Continuum, 2004). Most critiques of consumer culture by Christian writers take this shape. Craig Gay sees consumerism as a manifestation of the modern values of autonomous self-determination and secularization. Graham Ward and D. Stephen Long see unlimited human desire as driven by the heretical ontology of 'lack' at the heart of modernity. The problem of permitting consumerism to circulate only at the level of ideas, is that ways forward become competing ideas, on the assumption that belief's drive behavior. As Miller observes "dissent can be commodified." Protests against the excesses of capitalism, "sell quite well as consumer goods....Advanced capitalism has shown itself to be strangely immune to ideological criticism." p. 18.

"The 'invisible hand' of the marketplace is as unforgiving of ineffective religious firms as it is of their commercial counterparts."[524] If my faith is already a consumeristic choice about self-expressions and services designed to produce comfort and culminate in eschatological privilege designed just for me, the plight of the Stranger in the ditch remains dismal. How is this consciousness disturbed? Certainly not through religion per se. What are the spiritual dimensions to this question that enable me to see Other in the ditch and not walk by? How might teachers guide the gaze toward a life *for* Other? Solitude and action are the same, the former moving me to be true to who I am, beyond my beginnings and endings that point to the heroic fulfillment of desires, to life in the middle, life in the middle where Other already is. The question of how spirituality might underwrite openness to the Stranger has only been introduced and is worthy of ongoing consideration.

Finally, I think there are possible interconnections between a pedagogy of hospitality and the area of peace and/or social justice studies in education, particularly as these are unfolded in pedagogical relations between teachers and students. Most of the time teachers don't have to live with deep hatreds, either others' or those we might harbor ourselves. But what do I do with the likes and dislikes that are an inevitable part of education, as they unfold in ordinary classrooms? I am attracted to some students and seem either repelled by others or repel them myself. I befriend unequally, and some students easily become teacher's pet. Additionally, as has been discussed, even if I don't praise or condemn, I peg students, putting them into categories of intelligence or personality or some other category by which I stand over them, which destroys dignity and erects barriers. This is obviously two sided. I have a high school teacher friend who can't wait to retire, due to what he calls a "belittling culture" in his school. Some students can make me feel uneasy because I sense that they want to possess or dominate me. Others are trying to compete with me. Despite gestures of friendship, others might pursue a frontal assault and simply spurn me. I tend to reserve praise for those who affirm me and reject those who don't. Jean Vanier points out that all of these sorts of things "spring

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[524] Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in our Religious Economy,* (Piscataway, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1992), p. 17.

from the perception of danger to our sense of self."[525] Left unattended, they can create closed doors of prejudice. Or I may simply respond with indifference, telling myself that it is their education and that it is between them and the mark they get, a highly toxic posture that turns students into automatons of instrumentality and distances them as not belonging to a common humanity.

How does a classroom become a place of peace and/or social justice, a hospitable space where strangers can enter, belong, and even hold the possibility of authentic friendship? How can this space be created even in the midst of likes and dislikes, a space not to change people, but where change can occur, where strangers can enter to discover their own voices and songs and dances and feel free to leave to follow new callings? Again, I think there is much to be explored here in the practice of solitude, as egos with their frantic attachment to identities and desires to be liked or popular or even respected, egos that lie almost forgotten, are nursed to an Other side of their belovedness already in the face of the Other. This is the relational horizon behind alternative dispute resolution or mediation as well. Prior to the differences, inconsideration, conflicts, and/or enmity that sometimes brings life to its breaking point, there is Other, full of dignity, full of resources aplenty to find a future that may not solve one's sense of justice, but satisfies one's interests. The question of how interests can be served despite difference[526] is one that could hold promise for peace as teachers move beyond loving and advocating for peace, to become peacemakers.

There is so much to learn from Other who is allowed to remain Other. A pedagogy of hospitality opens the way for this compassionate responsibility and liberation. The African proverb announces this good news: *We love; therefore we are.*

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[525] Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human*, (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1998), p 142. (This is the transcription of 1998 CBC Massey Lectures.)

[526] Mediation is a powerful way in which difficult conversations can occur without demeaning persons. See Douglas Stone, Burce Patton, Sheila Heen, and Roger Fisher, *Difficult Conversation: How to Discuss What Matters Most.* (New York: Penguin Puttman, 1999). Mediation unfolds on the basis that individual social agents act according to their "feel for the game" around both their own and others interests, not some explicit economic, rational, or even ethical criteria or principle. While not related directly to mediation, there are many parallels in the ethnographic work of Pierre Bourdieu in post independence Algerian France, elucidating how the colonized class (peasants, immigrants, etc.) in France could become part of the game despite traditional hierarchies. See Pierre Bourdeau, *Outline of a Theory and Practise.* R. Nice, Translator. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977)

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